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VOLUME XXX, 1960–1

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Editorial

Douglas Grant, whose five years as editor of the QUARTERLY ended with the July issue, brought to this task abilities of a high order. His energy and resourcefulness in soliciting contributions from far-flung and distinguished sources and in extending the QUARTERLY's range of influence, his fine taste and scholarly discrimination, combined to make his editorship an important contribution not only to the traditions of this journal but to the whole community of scholarship.

In the course of a graceful and judicious tribute on the occasion of the QUARTERLY's quarter-century, Professor Roy Daniells observed that the QUARTERLY has always shown "a massive, almost impassive, faith in intellectual humanism." This faith involves, on the negative side, resistance to capture by coteries or controversies; on the positive, it demands that the editors try, within the limits of their judgment and resources, to publish contributors who are learned without pedantry and cultivated without frivolity. The present editors propose to keep this ideal before them, as their predecessors, from Brett to Grant, have done.

JAN S. PRYBYLA

The World of the Wealth of Nations

The *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was published on March 9, 1776, in two quarto volumes, at £1 16*s*. The Historical Chronicle of the *Gentleman's Magazine* has nothing of interest to report for that date, and the *Wealth of Nations* itself went by unnoticed by that journal. Two historical events, however, are noted: one for the day before—

> A woman who was charged with having seven husbands, all now living, was re-examined before the Lord-Mayor and committed to the Poultry-Compter till she can procure bail

—and one for the day after, Sunday, March 10:

> The anniversary sermon to recommend the institution of the Society for the Recovery of Drowned Persons was preached at St. Andrew's Holborn, by Dr. Dodd to a very numerous congregation. Twelve of the persons who had been recovered through the means of this institution attended, among whom were an elderly man, who had been fifty-five minutes under water, and a fine little boy.

It was just another English Saturday in March, "bright at times, but a great deal of rain," with its humdrum train of births ("the lady of Henry Hoars, esq., of a son in Fleet street"), marriages, and deaths.

The penmanship of the book reviewers was exercised on other, more weighty matters. Dr. Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* evoked the indignant protests of a fast-dying past:

> Government, says Mr. Price, is an institution for the benefit of the people governed, which they have the power to model as they please. If this was a fact, what anarchy and innovation must not be its consequence, if from every whim of a frantic multitude, the fabric must be subverted. . . . One cannot but smile when we hear of the omnipotence of an illiterate multitude. We should be, indeed, gloriously governed, if they were to be our rulers.

The spirit of '76 was abroad and, as it rocked the American continent, it rallied into vehement if anxious opposition the interests vested in a slow-

moving, familiar past. The novelty, the unspeakable cheek, the horror, the frightening potentialities of it all moved the patriotic pen of Dr. Price's critic:

> Allow an impossibility—The British troops retired from their [American] continent, their own Oliver on the throne, in a few months they would supplicate our assistance to free them from the yoke. What mind can look on the Congress but with horror?

It was a long epistle, full of pure emotion, and emotion needs space to make its point. There was no room for the *Wealth of Nations*. It slipped quietly into the world of '76, welcomed on that Saturday in March only by a few friends.

> Euge! Belle! Dear Mr. Smith—I am much pleased with your performance, and the perusal of it has taken me from a state of great anxiety. It was a work of so much expectation, by yourself, by your friends, and by the public, that I trembled for its appearance, but am now much relieved. Not but that the reading of it necessarily requires so much attention, and the public is disposed to give so little that I shall still doubt for some time of its being at first very popular, but it has depth and solidity and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts that it must at last attract the public attention.[1]

So wrote Hume several days after the appearance of the *Wealth of Nations*. And Gibbon:

> What an excellent work is that with which our common friend Mr. Adam Smith has enriched the public! An extensive science in a single book, and the most profound ideas expressed in the most perspicuous language.[2]

Not all the contemporaries, however, agreed on this last point. Wily old Alexander Carlyle, minister of religion at Inveresk, dissented on this, as on many other issues:

> Smith's fine writing is chiefly displayed in his book on Moral Sentiment, which is the pleasantest and most eloquent book on the subject. His *Wealth of Nations* from which he was judged to be an inventive genius of the first order, is tedious and full of repetition. His separate essays in the second volume have the air of being occasional pamphlets, without much force or determination. On political subjects his opinions were not very sound.[3]

Literary tastes change, of course, and the validity of political opinions is a moot question. In the *Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1776*, Smith's work is reviewed after Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, but while Gibbon is given five pages, Smith just makes it with two and a half. (Robert Watson's *The History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain* is accorded the honour of sixteen pages, but,

thinks Rae, this was probably owing to the identity of the reviewer rather than to the inherent merits of the book itself, the review having been probably written by Burke.) The review was laudatory:

> The French œconomical writers undoubtedly have their merit. Within this century they have opened the way to a rational theory, on the subjects of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce. But no one work has appeared amongst them, nor perhaps could there be collected from the whole together, any thing to be compared to the present performance, for sagacity and penetration of mind, extent of views, accurate distinction, just and natural connection and dependence of parts. It is a compleat analysis of society, beginning with the first rudiments of the simplest manual labour, and rising by an easy and natural gradation to the highest attainments of mental powers. In which course not only arts, and commerce, but finance, justice, public police, the œconomy of armies, and the system of education, are considered, and argued upon, often profoundly, always plausibly and clearly; many of the speculations are new, and time will be required before a certain judgment can be passed on their truth and solidity. The style of the author may be sometimes thought diffuse, but it must be remembered that the work is didactic, that the author means to teach, and teach things that are by no means obvious.

The intelligent reviewer thereupon abstains from further comment and quotes from Smith's own Introduction for the remaining two pages.

The perspicacity of the age was indeed keen. Business in books was good, writers numerous and prolific. The blessings of Gutenberg were pouring out of the presses in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Bristol in an unending stream. Publishers, printers, and retail booksellers (the boundary line was never quite distinct) were next only to the writers in numbers and enterprise: Dodsley in Pall Mall, Strahan and Cadell in the Strand, the Foulis brothers in Glasgow, Creech (the publisher of Burns) in Edinburgh, Robinson, Murray, Baldwin, Wilson, Maud, Rivington, Conant, Davies, Nicoll, and many more. Among them, Scotsmen were prominent. Strahan the printer and Cadell the bookseller were jointly the publishers of the *Wealth of Nations*. Strahan had joined Cadell several years before that memorable publication, and Cadell himself was for long associated with, and later replaced, another Scotsman of publishing renown, Andrew Millar.

Millar had retired from business in 1767. During his years in the London Strand he had the professional satisfaction and good fortune of seeing the ink dry on some of the century's best sellers: the novels of Fielding, the "Histories" of Hume and Robertson, the first and second editions of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. To his business laurels and personal discomfort—for his client was of an obstreperous turn of mind—Millar had in time added Dr. Johnson. In association with others of his calling,

he undertook the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*, and—we have it on his own authority—had suffered from the Doctor's literary dilatoriness. In 1755 Smith made his literary début with some pointed criticisms of Johnson's *Dictionary* in the first issue of the *Edinburgh Review*. The subject was, of course, very much within the province of Smith's interests; a few years before, and prior to his appointment to the Chair of Logic in Glasgow, he had delivered a series of lectures in Edinburgh on literature, literary criticism, and probably jurisprudence. A dissertation on the origin of languages was added to a later edition of the *Theory*, and one of Smith's several projects cut short by death was a philosophical history of the different branches of philosophy, poetry, and eloquence. To make matters worse, Smith had been reported as having on diverse occasions made light of the Doctor's style and his relation to common sense. "Of all the writers ancient and modern," he is reported as saying, "he that keeps off the greatest distance from common sense, is Dr. Samuel Johnson." Such remarks were not conducive to pacific co-existence between the two philosophers. Dr. Johnson was certainly not a man to take things lying down. Encouraged by Boswell, if indeed encouragement was needed, Johnson stepped forth on more than one occasion laying unmercifully to left and right. If we are to believe Boswell, Rae, Walter Scott, and others, the two men certainly "did not take to each other," and on one occasion at least, their meeting was marked by strong, and perhaps even ungentlemanly disagreement.

William Strahan, like his predecessor Millar, did well for himself. His list of clients included the great names of the period: Hume, Gibbon, Blair, Smith, Johnson, Robertson, and Blackstone. The policy of the house of Strahan and Cadell was marked by a judicious mixture of business acumen, literary sophistication, and conservatism: "I had rather risk my fortune with a few authors, as Mr. Gibbon, Dr. Robertson, D. Hume, etc., than be the publisher of a hundred insipid publications,"[4] writes Cadell to Gibbon in 1787. The word "risk" was perhaps too strong: Hume had been lionized in Paris as far back as 1764, and his views, unacceptable as they were to many a dignitary of the cloth both there and in his own country, whetted the appetite of a rapidly increasing reading public. Nor was Mr. Gibbon himself a publisher's risk: the *Decline and Fall* was sold out within a few days of publication. Nor, again, was there too much light-headed enterprise involved in the "etc.," for Strahan's son, Andrew, who succeeded his father before the fourth edition of the *Wealth*

of Nations, added to an already solid and imposing list the names of Adam Ferguson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Dugald Stewart.

It was indeed a time rich in outstanding intellectual productions. The spirit of the enlightenment was out and about. The desire for self-improvement was both real and fashionable. Alexander Carlyle, quoting ambassador Keith, complained that the Scottish lairds had but a restricted range of intellectual interests and a limited scope of polite conversation: bullocks and dung. But the merchants of London, Bristol, Glasgow, and other outports, the retired heroes of South Sea battles, the aspiring statesmen and the nabobs lounging in the fashionable watering places were eager to read, to learn, to understand, and not beneath spending £2 8*s*. for a volume of Postlethwayt's *History of the Public Revenue*, or 12*s*. for the two volumes of Kippax's translation of Uztariz's *Discourse of the Commerce and Finances of Spain*.

But the publisher's traditional problem of sifting out the chaff was real. There were, of course, books that would sell come rain come shine. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1776 provides a few good examples: *The Unalterable Nature of Vice and Virtue*, a sermon preached at St. James', Westminster, by Peter Peckard, M.A.; *Essay of Phraseaology for the Use of Young Ladies Who Intend to Learn the Colloquial Part of the Italian Language*, by Joseph Baretti; *A Relation of a Journey to the Glaciers in the Duchy of Savoy*, translated from the French of M. T. Bourritt. Then there were some posers that insisted on treating of some urgent current problems: *Taylor and Shiner's Survey of the Great Post-Roads between London and Bristol*. Ah, those English roads: "The roads grew bad beyond all badness, the night dark, beyond all darkness, the guide frightened beyond all frightfulness"[5] writes Horace Walpole, and Arthur Young—before he had experienced the miseries of French travel—echoes, "it would be a prostitution of language to call it a turnpike."[6] Roads, and tolls, and turnpike trusts, four words, three miseries. But there was more: *State of the Gaols in London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark*, by William Smith, M.D.; *An Address to the Public on the Expedience of a Regular Plan for the Maintenance and Government of the Poor*, by Richard Woodward—

> Theirs is yon House that holds the Parish-Poor,
> Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
> There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
> And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day.
> (Crabbe, *The Village*)

Science was climbing in through the roof: *An Essay on the Cause of Lightning*, and as Franklin chatted with Strahan over a glass of claret, Dr. John Clark was busy on his *Observations on the Diseases in Long Voyages to Hot Countries*. No one who could contrive to get himself into His Majesty's prison would go to sea in one of His Majesty's ships, Dr. Johnson once observed. *A Treatise of Optics*, by Joseph Harris, Esq., and *Observations on the Abuse of Medecine*, by Thomas Withers, M.D. Smith had been consulted on the vexed question of Scottish medical degrees; there were too many Scottish doctors in London for the health of Scottish medical reputation. But Smith was circumspect. He had known personally many a medical man of distinction: William Cullen his colleague at Glasgow and one of the founders of the Glasgow and Edinburgh medical schools of wide repute, William Hunter whose lectures on anatomy Smith attended in the company of Gibbon shortly before the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*, Hewson, Fordyce, and others. The Scottish physicians "from the city and Court end of town" often met in the British Coffee-House in Cockspur Street which was also Smith's G.H.Q. between 1773 and 1776. Smith seems to have shared the eighteenth-century's contempt for the medical profession to only a limited and restrained extent—he was more interested in the economics of it than in its technical intricacies:

> Do not all the old women in the country practise physic without exciting murmur or complaint? And if here and there a graduated Doctor should be as ignorant as an old woman, where can be the great harm? The beardless old woman indeed takes no fees; the bearded one does, and it is this circumstance, I strongly suspect, which exasperates his brethren so much against him.[7]

An Account and description of an improved Steam Engine which will, with the same Quantity of Fuel, and in an equal Space of Time, raise above double the Quantity of Water, than any Lever Engine of the same Dimensions, by N. D. Falck, M.D. The world was small then, the world which counted in the affairs of the mind, smaller. It was an intimate if taught world. It was in Geneva that Smith first met Georges Louis Le Sage, professor of physics. Le Sage and Smith must have had subjects of conversation in plenty, Le Sage having at the time shown a keen interest in the discoveries of Joseph Black, Smith's colleague at Glasgow and pioneer in the field of latent heat. Black had succeeded Cullen to the Chair of Anatomy in Glasgow in 1757: "Dr. Smith used to say that no man had less nonsense in his head than Dr. Black,"[8] writes John Robison of Edinburgh University

in his edition of *Black's Elements of Chemistry*, London, 1803. W. R. Scott informs us that Black had financed a good part of James Watt's experiments sometime between 1764 and 1769. It was John Roebuck, the founder of the Carron Iron Works (1760),[9] who paid up Watt's debts, and became *ipso facto* Watt's partner in the development of the steam engine, but later, under the stress of financial difficulties, sold his interest to Boulton. Everything connects in the small, busy world of the 1760's. All is revolution and discovery in the world of the 1770's. *Americans against Liberty, or an Essay on the Nature and Principles of true Freedom.* But there is freedom of expression here: *Resistance no Rebellion, in which the Right of a British Parliament to tax the American Colonies is fully considered and found unconstitutional.*

Pray what strange accounts are these we hear of Franklyn's conduct?[10]

Observations on the State of Population in Manchester and adjacent Places, by Thomas Percival, M.D. William Smellie, the pioneer of scientific midwifery, was building up a problem that would bring fame and notoriety to Thomas Robert Malthus. Joseph Priestley isolates oxygen, and though shocked at his own discovery, talks of it at dinner to Lavoisier, while Cavendish gives the Royal Society our H_2O, and keeps argon to himself. Witness Louis XV turning the presses in Versailles, delighted more with the form than the content of Quesnay's zigzags; and then stirred by the experimental urge, and tired perhaps of what, after all, was an ancient occupation, skipping along to the gardens to administer an electric shock to a mile-long line of venerable monks. A mile of monks umping into the air—a sight to divert Voltaire. But Voltaire was interested in the content.

We have it from Samuel Rogers that Smith had been in the company of Voltaire five or six times during his visit to Geneva in 1765. As often happens in such cases, we have no record of their conversations beyond the conjectures of Rae and the scattered references in Rogers' diary of his visit to Edinburgh in 1789. Rae is usually happy in his guesses; in fact, his biography of Smith is a somewhat perplexing document: it is remarkable for what it omits without the reader's being aware of the subtle difference between a good guess and a documented fact:

They seem to have spoken, as was very natural, of the Duke of Richelieu, the only famous Frenchman Smith had yet met, and of the political question as to the revival of the provincial assemblies or the continuance of government by royal intendants.[11]

All this appears to be based on the authority of Rogers, whom Cannan

charges with inexactitude or at least with lapses of memory on more than one occasion. Smith's veneration for Voltaire is recorded in more than one source: "reason owes him incalculable obligations," Smith is said to have exclaimed to Faujas Saint Fond, Professor of Geology in the Museum of Natural History in Paris on the occasion of the latter's visit to Edinburgh a few years before Smith's death. "He has done more for the benefit of mankind than those grave philosophers whose books are read by a few only."

Geneva at that time was on the intellectual outskirts of Fernay. Rousseau had left hurriedly for Paris, whence Hume to his future grief packed him off to England. It was in Geneva that Smith for the first time on his Continental tour enjoyed the society of men more learned than the Toulousian Abbé Colbert. At the house of the Duchesse d'Enville he met the young Duc de la Rochefoucauld who with his mother later became an habitué of Mirabeau's Physiocratic Tuesdays, "la Sorbonne de labourage" as Grimm contemptuously described them. There also he met the Earl of Stanhope, the sponsor of James Clow's edition of the mathematical works of Robert Simson. Simson was a colleague of Smith's at Glasgow College (Carlyle, for once, has a good word to say: "he was extremely courteous, and showed civility to every student who fell his way"). Clow was Smith's successor in the Chair of Logic, and it was probably on Smith's recommendation that he was chosen by Stanhope (himself a mathematician) to take on the task of editing Simson's materials. Charles Bonnet, naturalist and metaphysician of renown, was also of the Genevese company as was the Syndic Turretin and M. Le Sage.

It was in Paris, however, that Smith plunged with Kirkcaldian sobriety into the scintillating, brilliant world of the salons. "Ce charming philosopher . . . Oh ces Ecossois! ces chiens d'Ecossois!" writes Madame Riccobini to Garrick introducing Smith—but Smith in his distraction never seems to have availed himself of so heartfelt a recommendation. Garrick, of course, used on occasion to honour the British Coffee-House with his presence, where Goldsmith pondered over the mysteries of private finance. In the *entr'sol* of Versailles Smith had witnessed the 1766 physiocratic fever. There he met Quesnay and others of the sect. Dupont de Nemours, at first blinded perhaps by his unqualified reverence for Turgot and restricted in his mental evolutions by an equally total ignorance of the English language, thought Smith a judicious but simple man. The *Wealth of Nations* was to be dedicated to Quesnay, for whom the

Scottish philosopher felt a sincere and deep respect; but the book was twelve years in labour, and in the meantime death had removed the subject of the dedication. The *économistes* were to Smith "men of great learning and ingenuity," and their system, he thought, "never has done, and probably never will do any harm in any part of the world." This is not the language of a disciple of Quesnay, as Dupont explicitly states on the external evidence of Smith's visits to the *entr'sol*. But then Dupont did not always mean what he said. His restless mind was ever in search of an anchor, of a master, of an exalted friend and protector, be he Quesnay, Turgot, or Jefferson. The question of intellectual influences is wide open: ideas do not run on one way tracks, at least not between minds of equal strength and refinement. When they do, it is usually from the superior to the inferior or less trained—and so Dupont was perhaps merely projecting, though he later partly retracted.

1766. The "Ami des Hommes" had been converted from a state of feudal backwater nine years before, but it was only a year after Smith's visit to Versailles that he began his Tuesdays. The inimitable Grimm could bear no longer the restraining influence of Diderot on the Encyclopédistes and his pen threw out poison into the physiocratic assemblies:

> . . . on commence d'abord par bien dîner; ensuite on laboure, on pioche, on défriche, et on ne laisse pas dans toute la France un pouce de terrain sans valeur; et quand on a bien labouré ainsi, pendant toute une journée, dans un salon bien frais en été et au coin d'un bon feu en hiver, on se sépare le soir bien content et avec la conscience d'avoir rendu le royaume le plus florissant.[12]

Eight years previously, Louis XV had diverted himself by printing on his private presses a fine copy of the "Tableau." But physiocratic pens too were in action: Mirabeau had published three years before his *Philosophie rurale*, and was preparing a more readable summary under the watchful if now somewhat fading eye of the master himself. Dupont was busily editing the *Journal d'Agriculture*, and was to find himself shortly, and not for the first time, without regular employment. Mercier was spending all his waking hours in huddle with the Doctor, drafting the *Ordre naturel*, and Turgot, always a little on the side, had finished his *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*.

Smith landed in the very vortex of this activity, but his sense of proportion must have received strong reinforcements from his discussions with Galiani, Grimm, Morellet, d'Alembert, and Voltaire. In his *L'Homme aux Quarante Ecus* the philosopher of Fernay had inflicted a cruel wound

on the Physiocrats, but his subsequent silence was worse than open warfare. A world of deep shadows and brilliant sunshine: of Condillac, Marmontel, Raynal, Diderot, of Helvétius, Rousseau, and Morellet, but also of Macpherson, the chimney sweep, of cock-fights, bull-baiting, and the colonial "soul-driver." Observant in his distraction Smith had met them or knew of them all. He had dined with Helvétius in Paris—Helvétius, a friend of Turgot, one of the rare former but honest farmers-general.

The best and most frugal way of levying a tax can never be by a farm. Over and above what is necessary for paying the stipulated rent, the salaries of the officers, and the whole expense of administration, the farmer must always draw from the produce of the tax a certain profit proportioned at least to the advance which he makes, to the risk which he runs, to the trouble which he is at, and to the knowledge and skill which it requires to manage so very complicated a concern. . . . In countries where the public revenues are in farm, the farmers are generally the most opulent people. Even a bad sovereign feels more compassion for his people than can ever be expected from the farmers of his revenue.

The *Wealth of Nations*, of course. In the manner of Rae, we can make here a safe conjecture. There is even no need to state it. Helvétius the retired, opulent exception to the general run of farmers of taxes. But the next sentence is reminiscent of Quesnay's: "Pauvres paysans, pauvre royaume!" "He knows that the permanent grandeur of his family depends upon the prosperity of his people." Marmontel would drop in, full of the net product, babbling about the *impôt unique*, but really interested in securing a little whisper of Quesnay's into the ear of Madame de Pompadour. Unable to meet the good doctor on the ground floor, she would mount the ten odd steps to the *entr'sol*, and surprise the sect in the midst of unproductive labour. To the greater confusion, we may add, of the *Wealth of Nations*.

The Comtesse de Boufflers-Rouvel, pleased with Smith's *Theory*, proposed to translate it, if she had the time; her duties as mistress to the Prince de Conti, however, put an obstacle in the way of execution of this design. It was the widow of Condorcet who later found both the time and the energy to grace the world with the best French translation of Smith's favourite work. In the last year of his life, while tormented by a severe illness, Smith nonetheless undertook the task of revising the *Theory*. Among the additions and deletions, a new chapter is of significance, "On the corruption of our moral sentiments, which is occasioned by our disposition to admire the rich and the great, and to despise or neglect persons of poor and mean condition."

Thus, he who as it were bears the burden of society, has the fewest advantages.[13]

His mind moves back and forth, from the salons of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to the London docks, from the sumptuous covers of Madame de Geoffrin to the one-course Glasgow dinners at Mrs. Millar's opposite the college gate, from the austere, non-free-thinking salon of Madame Necker to the rough-and-tumble disputations of the British Coffee-House, of Old Slaughters in Martin's Lane, or the Turk's Head. Indeed, what the fashionable salons did for the *literati* and philosophers of Paris, the coffee-houses, dining clubs, and the publisher-nexus did for the writers, historians, gentlemen of liberal education and no precise vocation of England and Scotland.

London had its Cocoa Tree, Orsinda's, Smyrna, the British, St. James', Old Man's, Young Man's, Garraway's, Robbins', the Turk's Head, Old Slaughters, the Bedford, the Chapter, and many more catering to all tastes and pockets, to the needs of the mind and of the flesh (look out for the coffee house with the sign of a woman's hand holding a coffee pot!). Glasgow had its Anderston and Hodge-Podge clubs, Cochrane's Commercial (where Smith delivered his mysterious lecture of 1755), the Literary Society (Moor, Hamilton, Leechman, Clow, Lindsay, Dick, Ross, Cullen, Adam Smith, Ruat, and Bogle), and My Lord Ross's Club.[14] But clubman that he was, Smith was not a stranger to Edinburgh's Philosophical Society, and had a hand in founding the Select Society and the Poker Club: poker, an instrument for stirring up the militia question which vexed many a patriotic Scotsman.

On the bookstalls in London, Bath, Bristol, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, the merchant and the philosopher could dally over a volume of Law's *On Money and Trade*, Petty's *Political Arithmetic* ("I have no great faith in political arithmetic," Smith informs us, "and I mean not to warrant the exactness of . . . these computations").[15] The publishers advertised their wares: in 6*d*. parts you could acquire with little trouble and less expense Postlethwayt's *Dictionary of Commerce* or Child's *On Trade*. But a tradition was being born: you could browse through the volumes and read in the street for as long as you thought fit and decent, leave a marker and return the next day. Institutionalized, official higher education—with few exceptions, and Glasgow was one—was at its lowest ebb. Moth was gathering on the Bodleian and the rot had set in: ". . . it will be his own fault if any one should endanger his health at Oxford by excessive Study, our only business here being to go to prayers twice a day and to lecture twice a week," writes the young Smith to his mother in 1740. And

thirty-six years later he reiterates: "In the university of Oxford, the greater part of the public professors have, for these many years, given up altogether even the pretence of teaching."[16]

The revival was to come from the streets, from the clubs, from the printers' presses and the conversations of cultivated men. But all was not well even in the world of letters: "Even the world of literature and taste is divided into the most virulent factions, which revile, decry, and traduce the works of one another," writes Smollett in *Humphry Clinker*. And Voltaire laments: "ces brochures périodiques ou des hommes incapables de rien produire, dénigrent les productions des autres."[17]

Smollett, Carlyle, Home, Robertson, and Smith dining in Chelsea, while Richard Cumberland, flushed with the pride of a new publication (*Odes*, by Richard Cumberland, reports the *Gentleman's Magazine* in April, 1776), drops in to receive the shafts of criticism and the comfort of acclamation in the Cockspur Street retreat. As likely as not, he would find there the brothers Adam at their appointed station. Sometimes, indeed, Boswell would look in: Boswell, an Edinburgh pupil of Smith.

The *Wealth of Nations* slipped quietly into this world. It was much more than a treatise on economics. It left no stone unturned, no nook unexplored. It is a great period piece, it breathes the air of its age and rubs shoulders with the men of all times: Thomas Gainsborough, Romney, Hogarth, and Allan Ramsay, Joshua Reynolds, James Gibb, Sheraton, and Chippendale, Pigalle, Thomas Gray, James Thomson, Burns, and William Cowper, James Hutton, Alexander Dalrymple, and Baretti, Cook, Clive, Mansfield, Baskerville, Wedderburn, Wilkes, Malesherbes, and John Millar, Pitt, Fox, and Howe, lords, ladies, courtesans, learned men, fops, merchants, braggadocios, statesmen, and nabobs. But Smith hears voices to which his age often turns a deaf ear:

> Masters . . . sometimes enter into particular combinations to sink the wages of labour. . . . These are always conducted with the utmost silence and secrecy, till the moment of execution, and when the workmen yield, as they sometimes do, without resistance, though severely felt by them, they are never heard of by other people.[18]

Wesley heard those voices and prescribed his own remedy.

To look upon the *Wealth of Nations* as primarily a work of economic analysis is not incorrect, though it certainly is hampering to full understanding. Schumpeter in his *History of Economic Analysis* discovers this on the way, for while acknowledging Smith's opus to be "a great analytical achievement," he also finds that it "does not contain a single *analytic* idea,

principle, or method that was entirely new in 1776." The sweep of the *Wealth of Nations* is grandiose, its interests and objectives many. A perfunctory look at the index will suggest that this is so, and a more careful and leisurely study of the book's argument will confirm the first impressions:

> Abassides, opulence of Saracen empire under.
> Abraham, weighed shekels.
> Achilles, Agamemnon's offer to.
> Arabia, hospitality of chiefs.
> Beggar, alone depends on benevolence, once synonymous with scholar.
> Butcher, brutal and odious business.
> Columbus . . . why he gave the names of Indies to the islands he discovered.
> Drunkenness, the motive to this vice inquired into.
> Dissenters, learned but not so popular as methodists.
> Geometry, should be taught in parish schools.
> Greek language, how introduced as part of university education.
> Hose, in the time of Edward IV how made.
> James I, his marriage bed, brought from Denmark.
> Law, the language of, how corrupted.
> Logic, the origin and employment of.
> Metaphysics, the science of explained.
> Music . . . and dancing, great amusements among barbarous nations.
> Ontology, the science of explained.
> Persecution for religious opinions, the true cause of.
> Pneumatics, the science of explained.
> Stomach, desire of food bounded by narrow capacity of the.
> Travelling for education, summary view of the effects of.
> Versailles idle because the residence of a court; an ornament to France.
> Universities . . . are not well calculated to prepare men for the world.

And so it goes. Diffuse, perhaps, but economics provides a thread of unity. Economics and a certain attitude towards economic problems rather than any one specific theory. There seems to be little doubt that the mass of descriptive evidence apart, the theory of value, for example, lends weight to the scientific claims of the work, and in its time strengthened the case against the scattered and haphazard views and policies of mercantilism. But the *Wealth of Nations* does not stand or fall on an erroneous and contradictory theory of value. Smith's individualism is, indeed, woven into the value theory, but the particular version of the theory which he expounds is not indispensable to the survival of the individualist idea. The parallel with Marx is striking: knock the theory of value out from under the Marxist theoretical structure and you may justly expect the whole to come tumbling down. But we well know that Marxism is much more than

a model to be argued away. Hence the nervousness of many an economist today with the somewhat excessive concentration on model-building, and the relative paucity of philosophical inquiry into the *raison d'être* for their technically refined and highly sensitive brain-children. Little indeed, is left at the present time of Smith's strictly theoretical scheme relative to value, capital, and distribution. His discourse on taxation appears to many crude.[19] Yet the foundation which he laid for the idea of working for personal gain, the impulse which he imparted into the study of income rather than "treasure," and of wealth per head rather than wealth in the aggregate, has gamely stood up to the vicissitudes of time and the inconstancies of scientific fashions, though not without abrasions. The *Wealth of Nations* is the product of a wise man rather than of a skillful technician, and a study in Smith is above all an adventure in the topography of the Western mind. It is as such that its freshness is unimpaired and its brilliance untarnished after well nigh two hundred years.

notes

1 John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (London, 1895), 286.
2 *Ibid.*, 287.
3 *Autobiography of the Rev. Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk* (Edinburgh, 1860).
4 C. R. Fay, *Adam Smith and the Scotland of his Day* (Cambridge, 1956), 129.
5 Rosamund Bayne-Powell, *Travellers in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1951).
6 *Ibid*, 26.
7 Smith to Cullen, Sept. 20, 1774, quoted in Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, 276.
8 W. R. Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (Glasgow, 1938), 268.
9 Cf. *Wealth of Nations*, 76.
10 Hume to Smith, Feb. 13, 1774, quoted in C. R. Fay, *Adam Smith*, 126.
11 Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, 189.
12 Georges Weulersse, *Les Physiocrates* (Paris, 1931), 26.
13 *Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith and reported by a student in 1763* (New York, 1956), 163.
14 John Strang, *Glasgow and its Clubs* (London, 1857).
15 *Wealth of Nations*, 501.
16 *Ibid.*, 718.
17 *L'Ingénu* (Geneva, 1767).
18 *Wealth of Nations*, 67.
19 Edwin Cannan, "Adam Smith as an Economist," *Economica*, June, 1926.

LYALL H. POWERS

Henry James and Zola's Roman expérimental

Edmund Gosse and W. C. Frierson agree that Henry James's *The American* inaugurated the experimental novel in English.[1] Frierson correctly attributes this development to the influence of the Flaubert circle, but *The American* is surely too Hawthornesque and has too much of the cape-and-sword atmosphere to qualify seriously as an experimental novel. I would suggest that the French naturalists' influence on James is not clearly discernible until the decade of the eighties: James's first period ends with *The Portrait of a Lady*, while his "naturalist period" begins with "The Art of Fiction" and ends with *The Tragic Muse*.[2] The works of that period seem to offer substantial evidence of the influence of the *cercle Flaubert* generally, and of the ideas set forth in Zola's *Roman expérimental* in particular. *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima*, and *The Tragic Muse* are very nearly "experimental" in Zola's sense, as they seem to adhere closely to his principles regarding the role of heredity and environment and the force of determinism.[3]

Zola's professed dependence upon the works of scientists like Letourneau, Lucas, and Claude Bernard (*Introduction à la médecine expérimentale*, 1865) is well known. Like Balzac he maintains the legitimacy of adapting the scientific—the experimental—method to literature, and avows pointedly that "j'estime que la question d'hérédité a une grande influence dans les manifestations intellectuelles et passionnelles de l'homme. Je donne aussi une importance considérable au milieu."[4] These two forces will, in theory, be of primary concern to the novelist: he will expose a person of given heredity to a selected *milieu* and record the reactions with seeming objectivity, in order to demonstrate his thesis. The novel becomes a scientific experiment—"une expérience 'pour voir' "—hence the title of "experimental novel."[5]

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Et c'est là ce qui constitue le roman expérimental: posséder des phénomènes chez l'homme, montrer les rouages des manifestations intellectuelles et sensuelles telles que la physiologie nous les expliquera, sous les influences de l'hérédité et des circonstances ambiantes puis montrer l'homme vivant dans le milieu social qu'il a produit lui-même, qu'il modifie tous les jours, et au sein duquel il éprouve à son tour une transformation continue.[6]

James's admiration of Balzac, "the father of us all," and of George Eliot (who had, says Brunetière, "levé . . . le drapeau du naturalisme en Angleterre"[7]) perhaps made inevitable his association with the *cercle Flaubert*, "the grandsons of Balzac." His introduction to the group, *via* Turgenev in 1874, gave him first-hand knowledge of their theories, especially Zola's. Regular return visits to Paris in immediately subsequent years kept James in touch with the group, and his letters of those years record a steadily increasing approval of their works, especially, again, those of Zola. Although even at the moment of his greatest admiration for Zola he withheld complete approval, he nevertheless constantly appreciated Zola's idea and aim—the method and system on which his works were based. James's long essay on the occasion of Zola's death expresses qualified acceptance of the novelist but a firm appreciation of the method. This attitude is consistent with James's review of *Nana*:

We have no space to devote to a general consideration of M. Zola's theory of the business of the novelist, or to the question of naturalism at large—much further than to say that the system on which the series of *Les Rougons-Macquart* has been written, contains, to our sense, a great deal of very solid ground. M. Zola's attempt is an extremely fine one; it deserves a great deal of respect and deference, and though his theory is constantly at odds with itself, we could, at a pinch, go a long way with it without quarreling. What we quarrel with is his application of it. . . .[8]

This in 1880.

James's reply to Walter Besant in 1884, "The Art of Fiction," is shot through with the theoretic attitudes of the *cercle Flaubert*. There are many striking verbal parallels, of course (for example, on the timidity of the English novelists: James, "There is a great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print," and Zola, "Le crime est donc d'avoir dit tout haut ce que beaucoup d'autres pensent tout bas"[9]), but it is in the tone of the whole essay that the similarity to the theoretic writings of Zola, Maupassant, and others is to be found. One important theme of the essay is, to rephrase Emerson, "Free should the novelist be, free and brave."[10] This reminds one of Zola's typical plea for the writer, "Pas grâce, laissez-le écrire comme bon lui semble." But there are still other observations to be made.

Three years after the tremendous success of *L'Assommoir* (1877), the triple publication of *Nana*, *Le Roman expérimental*, and *Les Soirées de Médan* made a large step toward consolidating the growing popularity of Naturalism in France. And by the beginning of 1884 Naturalism was strongly in vogue. In February of that year Henry James wrote to both his brother William and Howells to praise highly the literary pursuits of the naturalist group: "I have been seeing something of Daudet, Goncourt, and Zola; and there is nothing more interesting to me now than the *effort* and *experiment* of this little group. . . ."[11] He also noted, we can be sure, that Naturalism was in possession of the public ear; James was sufficiently the professional writer to realize that a flavour of Naturalism in his own works would in no way harm their chances of popularity.[12] And this realization, added to the facts of James's literary development and his continued experiment with forms of fiction, would perhaps permit us to expect the immediately post-1884 works to bear some mark of the Naturalist influence. In March, 1884, he wrote to T. S. Perry about two novels on which he was then at work, "They are to be the best things I have done, and the former a remorseless exploitation of Boston."[13] The two "best things" were, of course, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*, and it is these two with the later *The Tragic Muse* that offer us the earliest example of James's attempt at the experimental novel.

James's treatment of the "case" of Verena Tarrant—the naïve girl with her strange progenitors and upbringing, introduced consecutively to the contradictory influences of Olive Chancellor and Basil Ransom, and driven on by her particular passion (of which she herself is but half aware)—seems to emphasize the importance of hereditary and environmental influence in determining Verena's career. James comments that "it would have seemed to you eminently natural that a daughter of Selah Tarrant and his wife should be an inspirational speaker," and permits Ransom this observation:

> he saw she was honest and natural; she had queer, bad lecture-blood in her veins, and a comically false idea of the aptitude of little girls for conducting movements; but her enthusiasm was of the purest, her illusions had a fragrance, and so far as the mania for producing herself was concerned, it had been instilled into her by people who worked her for ends which to Basil Ransom could only appear insane. She was a touching, ingenuous victim, unconscious of the pernicious forces which were hurrying her to her ruin.[14]

These pernicious forces are essentially similiar to the "queer, bad lecture-blood," and are specifically indicated as such: "She had been nursed in

darkened rooms, and suckled in the midst of manifestations; she had begun to 'attend lectures,' as she said, when she was quite an infant, because her mother had no one to leave her with at home. She had sat on the knees of somnambulists, and had been passed from hand to hand by trance-speakers; she was familiar with every kind of 'cure,' and had grown up among lady-editors of newspapers advocating new religions, and people who disapproved of the marriage-tie." (Pp. 83–4.) Olive's influence is the latest item in this catalogue.

Ransom exerts an antagonistic influence on Verena and he ultimately comes to dominate. She becomes his wife, forsaking Olive and renouncing her penchant for conducting movements. Expressed simply, the purpose of the experiment has been to see which of the antagonistic environmental forces will determine Verena's fate: was her passion to be moved to express itself publicly under Olive's tutelage, or privately under Ransom's?

Clearly, Verena is not simply a passive creature, a victim of these forces. Indeed, the story is in a sense the awakening of her volition: ultimately she appears to choose between Olive and Ransom—even though the latter does literally carry her away. The awakening begins with her announcing to Olive her intention not to avoid Ransom: "The way for me then is to meet him, feeling conscious of my strength. What if I do like him?" (P. 372.) And the culmination of the development is her permitting Ransom to carry her off:

> It was simply that the truth had changed sides: . . . Instead of being constituted by nature for entertaining that sentiment [love] in an exceptionally small degree (which had been the implication of her whole crusade, the warrant of her offer of old to Olive to renounce), she was framed, apparently, to allow it at the largest range, the highest intensity. It was always passion in fact; but now the object was other. (P. 384.)

The story of the modern Hyacinthus, fatally suspended between two loves, offers the clearest example of the Jamesian experimental novel. The hereditary influences are more explicitly present in *The Princess Casamassima* than in the other two novels of the eighties, and the environmental forces which play upon the hero correspond quite closely to the hereditary, and thus provide a complex little case for experiment. Briefly, Hyacinth Robinson is a combination of two pairs of antagonistic (in the terms of the novel) elements: French and English, common and aristocratic blood. The first element in each pair comes from his mother, the second from his father (we assume). He is placed in a *milieu* in which he is influenced in turn by various combinations of these elements: each of his several

experiences realizes one aspect (or more) of his hereditary mixture. For instance, his earliest *milieu* is English and commoner; the Poupins realize the French-commoner element; at the Muniments he is introduced to English-aristocratic influence; and with the Princess Casamassima he meets French-aristocratic influence (with the Princess, American wife of an Italian noble though she is, Hyacinth recognizes that French is the aristocratic tongue).

The role of heredity is made amply clear throughout the novel:

> He had no need to reason about it; all his nerves and pulses pleaded and testified. His mother had been a daughter of the wild French people—all Pinnie could tell him of her parentage was that Florentine had once mentioned that in her extreme childhood her father, his gun in his hand, had fallen in the blood-stained streets of Paris on a barricade; but on the other side it took an English aristocrat to account for him, though a poor specimen apparently had to suffice . . . the reflexion that he was a bastard involved in a remarkable manner the reflexion that he was a gentleman. . . . all the same he was happy to feel he had blood in his veins that would account for the finest sensibilities.[15]

Much later in the novel, after the climax has been passed, Hyacinth again muses on his peculiar destiny: "There was no peace for him between the two currents that flowed in his nature, the blood of his passionate plebeian mother and that of his long-descended super-civilized sire. They continued to toss him from one side to the other; they arrayed him in intolerable defiances and revenges against himself." (Vol. VI, p. 264.)

The dilemma which Hyacinth Robinson thus describes to himself is, of course, what the novel is all about—this provides the material for the experiment. How will the subject turn out? Hyacinth is led into a series of social contacts each of which serves to realize some combination of his hereditary complement. Through the paternal Vetch he makes the acquaintance of Eustache Poupin and Paul Muniment and, in fact, of the whole subterranean movement for social reform. Not only do these contacts represent the "commoner" side of Hyacinth, they also resurrect the republican strain of his maternal grandfather, the earlier Hyacinthe. He is welcomed into the group of reformers because it is understood that he has a special score to settle with society. Hyacinth's apparent conviction that he belongs with the anarchists leads him to the very heart of the movement to make his special vow to the mysterious Hoffendahl. By this time, however, the complexity of Hyacinth's situation has already begun to appear. At Paul Muniment's he makes contact with the English aristocracy in the willowy form of Lady Aurora. His position is further complicated by his meeting through Captain Sholto, a *habitué* of the

"Sun and Moon," with the Princess Casamassima—an even more exalted representative of the aristocracy. Not only has he become increasingly aware of the opposed attractions and their effect on his most profound desires, but also these two magnetic forces are now seen to be crossed and apparently inextricably involved. The final turn of the screw is applied by the discovery that the Princess is more closely associated with Hoffendahl than he himself is, and this in spite of his recent oath. As though it were not enough to be condemned to two antagonistic affinities, Hyacinth finds his dilemma infinitely complicated by the fact that he can never be sure of the object of these affinities or of the representatives to which they should be attached.

With his peculiar background and in such a confusing environment, Hyacinth, indeed, is never sure of who he is and of what he is actually seeking. Perhaps the clearest expression of this follows the suggestion of Paul Muniment, "Perhaps you're French":

> He had never yet had to decide that important question. He didn't really know if he were French or were English, or which of the two he should prefer to be. His mother's blood, her suffering in an alien land, the unspeakable, irremediable misery that consumed her in a place and among a people she must have execrated—all this made him French; yet he was conscious at the same time of qualities that didn't mix with it. . . . He had had a father too, and his father had suffered as well, . . . and him also he felt in his spirit and his sense. . . . At any rate he seemed rooted in the place where his wretched parents had expiated, and he knew nothing of any other. . . . Our young friend was under a cloud and a stigma, but he was not yet prepared to admit he was ridiculous. "Oh, I dare say I ain't anything," he replied in a moment. (Vol. V, pp. 112–3.)[16]

Of course Hyacinth does not rest with such an evasion of the problem; his whole history is in a remarkable way his search for himself, and his career (like Tom Jones's) carries him across the various sections of society in his attempt to find the truth, to find his identity.[17] His whole environmental experience is, however, topsy-turvy: the social order, so far as Hyacinth experiences it, is apparently all inverted or perverted. The representatives of the aristocracy seem opposed to their own class—when the Princess assures Mme Grandoni that "we're living in a fool's paradise, that the ground's heaving under our feet," she replies that "It's not the ground, my dear; it's you who are turning somersaults"—and if the common or lower orders are not quite opposed to their own, they are at least much concerned to maintain the existing heirarchy, the *status quo* which Hyacinth never really comes to know. The staunch Paul Muniment "seemed capable of turning revolutionists themselves into ridicule for the

entertainment of the revolutionized" (vol. V, p. 131), and Rose reprimands her brother, "You'll make a great mistake if you try to turn everything around." The obvious comparison made by Hyacinth between the two women in his life states the "upside-down" theme strongly:

> Millicent . . . seemed to answer in her proper person for creeds and communions and sacraments; she was more than devotional, she was individually almost pontifical. . . . The Princess Casamassima came back to him in comparison as a loose Bohemian, a shabby adventuress. . . . The Princess wanted to destroy society and Millicent to uphold it. . . . (Vol. VI, pp. 328–9.)

The whole complication is so arranged, then, as to fix Hyacinth in immobility. When finally he has grown fully aware of his dilemma—that he is condemned, both by his conflicting hereditary strains and by the impulse of conflicting environmental forces (which so nearly match them)—he finds that there is no solution open to him, that there remains but one line of action. Like Emma Bovary, he is faced with a single option. The brutal experiment has ground to its logical conclusion.

Hyacinth's case is at once simpler and more complicated than Verena's or than any case in Zola. It is simpler in that he is much more the victim of the forces of heredity and environment than is Verena. On the other hand, while these forces still remain the determining cause of his fate, it is Hyacinth's *consciousness* of his inheritance as much as, if not more than, the force itself, that propels him through his long disease. (In this respect he is much more a responsible agent than the typical hero of Zola.) We never really *know*, as Hyacinth himself never knows, who his father was. But this does not in the least mitigate our contention: the forces acting in this "experiment" remain those with which the Naturalist was to be concerned. The choices made by Hyacinth, as by Verena, give the illusion that the hero acted as a free agent. In truth the choices were determined by the reaction of his character and the pressure of circumstances. James might have said that the outcome of their lives couldn't have been other than it was, that life is at the best a tin mould into which one's consciousness is poured like a helpless jelly, so that one takes the form and is more or less compactly held by it; still (he would add), one has the illusion of freedom. Perhaps that is the great, the only value.

Although *The Tragic Muse* reflects James's growing preoccupation with his imminent turning to the theatre (this was to be "my last long novel"), it nevertheless qualifies in significant ways as a companion piece to the

other two novels of the decade, certainly insofar as they may be considered Jamesian experimental novels. It is, in fact, a double experiment. We have Nick Dormer, bred in a richly political atmosphere, with traditionally political antecedents, introduced to environmental influences which push him in two opposed directions: into the House of Commons and into the artist's studio. Miriam, the progeny of an artistic Jew and of a daughter of the house of the Neville-Nugents, is hereditarily determined to the life of art—with a tinge of the commercial and mercenary always present.

The political strain in Nick's blood is made abundantly clear, and the presence of his father, the earlier Nicholas, is only less pervasive in this novel than is that of Mrs. Newsome in *The Ambassadors*. Like Hyacinth Robinson, Nick is acutely conscious of his ancestry;[18] he describes his "hereditary talent" to Julia Dallow, calling it "a tremendous force," and adding, "Innumerable vows and pledges rest on my head, I'm inextricably committed and dedicated. I was brought up in the temple like the infant Samuel; my father was a high-priest and I am a child of the Lord." (Vol. VIII, pp. 75–6.)

This is the hereditary force which Nick feels to be propelling him directly into the House of Commons. But there is a strong suggestion that he has, like Hyacinth Robinson, a mixed heredity: two statements of Lady Agnes about her son are revealing. In upbraiding Nick for neglecting his duty, she phrases her idea thus: "He had never been in good faith—never, never; he had had from his earliest childhood the nastiest hankerings after a vulgar little daubing trash-talking life . . ." (vol. VIII, pp. 183–4). Two pages later, Grace deplores her brother's defection, observing that he would fail in the artistic line, "It isn't as if he'd do things people would like." Her mother's sharp rejoinder explains "that as it happened, her children did have a good deal of artistic taste: Grace was the only one who was totally deficient in it. Biddy was very clever. . . ."

This apparent mixture of influences accounts for Nick's confusion, his perplexity in the face of the antagonistic attractions he feels warring for his soul. He admits the duality of his being to Lady Agnes, explaining, "I'm two quite distinct human beings, who have scarcely a point in common; . . . One wins the seat, but it's the other fellow who sits in it" (vol. VII, p. 244). Even Julia Dallow recognizes Nick's duality; she accuses him, "You're everything you pretend not to be" (vol. VII,

p. 277). And it is this dilemma that Nick elaborates to Nash, exclaiming "I don't know *what* I am—heaven help me!" He then wonders at the malicious treatment he has received from the gods, and half ironically accuses Nash of his conspiring with them: "you opened my eyes, you communicated the poison . . . I'm stricken. *'C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée'*—putting Venus for 'art.' It tears me to pieces as I may say." (Vol. VII, p. 182.) Of course his artistic bent comes from somewhere. We recall the revealing admissions of Lady Agnes; and there is the small but definite fact of Biddy's sculpture to be accounted for. What is important, however, is Nick's conception of his position—as Hyacinth's was for him.

The hereditary strains are realized for Nick in the contacts he makes with his environment. First, his immediate family—excluding Biddy—"stand for" the political strain; likewise, the solid presence of Mr. Charles Carteret at Beauclere, who never fails to remind Nick of the force of his political heredity;[19] and then the figure of Julia Dallow, who is virtually the symbol of the attraction of the political life (resembling, in her representative role, Millicent and Christina in *The Princess Casamassima*), as Nick indicates in saying to her "you're the incarnation of politics" (vol. VIII, p. 75).[20] But on the other hand, his environment presents him with the inspirational Nash (as well as the compassionate Biddy) and with the tragic muse herself. Nash's role is apparent in the "Venus" quotation above: "At Oxford you were very bad company for me—my evil genius," Nick accuses him; "you opened my eyes. . . ." Nash continues to be very bad company, particularly when he assures Nick he finds real ability in his painting. And then, of course, Nick's interest in Miriam Rooth, the tragic muse, a goddess of art and Nick's first model in the novel, brings him likewise into close connection with another realization of that side of his dual heredity.

Miriam's case is almost as fully treated as Nick's: her heredity is amply presented. Biddy exclaims, on learning something from Nash of Miriam's parentage, "A Jewish stockbroker, a dealer in curiosities: what an odd person to marry—for a person who was well born!" (vol. VII, p. 62). Nash then continues his information:

". . . a Neville-Nugent of Castle Nugent? That's the high lineage of [Miriam's] mama. I seem to have heard it mentioned that Rudolf Roth was very versatile and, like most of his species, not unacquainted with the practice of music. He had been employed to teach the harmonium to Miss Neville-Nugent and she had profited by his lessons. If his daughter's like him—and she's not like her mother—he was darkly and dangerously handsome. So I venture rapidly to reconstruct the situation." (Vol. VII. p. 63.)

This rapid reconstruction permits us to perceive that Miriam also had a mixed lineal background. And even the paternal donation to her strain was itself mixed, part artistic, part commercial. (This is an example of the theory of hereditary "crossing" which Zola took from Lucas' *Traité de l'hérédité naturelle.*) Peter Sherringham's view of Miriam recalls Basil Ransom's view of Verena Tarrant; "Sherringham thought it an odd unpromising stock (that of the Neville-Nugents) for a dramatic talent to have sprung from, till he reflected that the evolution was after all natural: the figurative impulse in the mother had become conscious, and therefore higher, through finding an aim, which was beauty, in the daughter." He then adds strength to Nash's observation on Miriam's probable resemblance to her father: "Likely enough the Hebraic Mr. Rooth, with his love of old pots and Christian altar-cloths, had supplied in the girl's composition the aesthetic element, the sense of colour and form" (vol. VII, p. 220). And Nick adds a similar observation in an important scene much later in the novel, that Miriam "was visibly her father's child" (vol. VIII, p. 305).

Miriam's genetic background is, then, quite fully enough presented. We can but conclude that it is intended to have some bearing on her actions in the novel. What is odd, however, in view of this, is that at first glance Miriam's environmental experience appears to consist chiefly of the realization of the artistic component of her character. She certainly had not a completely smooth row to hoe, but the chief obstacle, apparently, is herself, the roughness of her own genius. Nash, her original sponsor, makes light of the contemporary theatre generally and of Miriam's histrionic ability in particular; but even though it is a movement of irony for him to introduce her to Mme Carre, he it is, nevertheless, who sets Miriam on her proper course. Mme Carre figures largely in Miriam's experience and is—also, at first, in spite of herself—instrumental in propelling her towards her goal. And the interest of Peter in things theatrical, and his personal attention to Miriam (including rather immense material favours), are likewise apparently the means of adding impetus to Miriam's drive toward becoming the English Rachel.

But Peter's role is complex: his assistance to Miriam depends on selfish motives—he is interested in the woman, not the actress—and he comes really to represent an antagonistic force. Mrs. Rooth views him as an admirable match for Miriam, a match that would mean Miriam's leaving the stage, as Peter indeed ultimately demands. Miriam's situation, then, has been quite as difficult as Nick's, and the appearance of smooth progress

to her goal has been illusory. Her struggle is quite discernible, after all, in such touches as her brushing away her tears as she informs Mrs. Rooth of Peter's imminent departure (vol. VIII, p. 258).

Miriam's acceptance of Peter's departure amounts, finally, to her recognition of her real choice, the right road. Nash recognized the inevitability of Miriam's choice and indicated as much, in the way of a warning, to the infatuated Peter by sketching the man she must marry. As it happens, the portrait is given obliquely, since he is explaining why Nick Dormer could never serve in that role; he has observed that "She ought to marry the prompter or the box keeper" (vol. VIII, p. 202). Then, disqualifying Nick, Nash continues:

> ". . . Imagine him writing her advertisements, living on her money, adding up her profits, having rows and recriminations with her agent, carrying her shawl, spending his days in her rouge-pot. The right man for that, if she must have one, will turn up. 'Pour le mariage, non.' She isn't wholly an idiot; she really, for a woman, quite sees things as they are." (Vol. VIII, p. 203.)

The right man, of course, is Basil Dashwood, and in choosing him Miriam is (given her temper, her hereditary complement) allowing her dominant passion to be directed into its proper channels—the theatre.

Nick, certainly, has been intimately involved in Miriam's problem, and his own in a way parallels hers (the Nick-Julia connection closely resembles the Peter–Miriam). Like Miriam, Nick has been driven by a dominant passion—his is a passion for doing his duty. And like Verena's, Nick's passion is guided by the political forces of his environment into channels which, according to the novel's values, prove to be the wrong ones. His dilemma, then, results from an apparent failure to recognize his true path of duty; but the suggestion is strong that Nick was really aware of his error, that he was virtually practicing self-deception. Standing for Harsh was almost a caprice, done for the sport of it. The "sporting" imagery used to express his political success reinforces that impression: "He had risen to the fray as he had risen to matches at school . . . he could do these things because it was amusing and slightly dangerous" and "he appreciated the coincidence of the hit and the hurrah, the hurrah and the hit."[21] Two voices, however, admonish Nick that he has not really been playing the game, "one of them fitfully audible in the depths of his own spirit and the other . . . [that of] Gabriel Nash." But he persists in the imitation, feeling, as he does in Mr. Carteret's congratulatory presence, that "It was plain he was not fated to go in for independence . . ." (vol. VII, p. 304).

And his success culminates, symbolically as well as realistically, in his engagement to Julia—the incarnation of politics.

No sooner has he succeeded in this one pursuit than he feels, like Hyacinth Robinson after a similar success, his acute distaste for "the beastly cause." Nick's confession to Julia reminds one of Hyacinth's to Christina: "I've imperilled my immortal soul, or at least bemuddled my intelligence, by all the things I don't care for that I've tried to do, and all the things I detest that I've tried to be, and all the things I never can be that I've tried to look as if I were . . ." (vol. VIII, p. 9). At least Nick seems ready to abide by his "choice." But his situation is immediately complicated again (and again we are reminded of *The Princess*) by his subsequent success in the other cause, in his almost abandoned art. Nash's visit to his studio convinces Nick that he has succeeded artistically: he "found himself imputing value to his visitor—attributing to him . . . the dignity of judgement, the authority of knowledge. Nash was an ambiguous character but an excellent touchstone." (Vol. VIII, p. 24.) This occurrence opens his eyes; he now sees his proper road and, like Verena Tarrant, is now ready to follow the true dictates of his nature—or at least to be propelled in that direction, for he is still a bit confused about his path of duty (and he must attend to his duty). Nash sets him straight on that, too, and by stealing his thunder!

> "Don't you recognize in any degree the grand idea of duty?"
>
> "If I don't grasp it with a certain firmness I'm a deadly failure, for I was quite brought up on it," Nick said.
>
> "Then you're indeed the wretchedest failure I know. Life *is* ugly after all."
>
> "But what do you call right? What's your canon of certainty there?" Nick asked.
>
> "The conscience that's in us—that charming conversible infinite thing, the intensest thing we know. . . . One must do one's best to find out the right, and your criminality appears to be that you've not taken the commonest trouble." (Vol. VIII, p. 25.)

Fortunately, the vow Nick has made is cancelled by Julia, so that he can be saved from Hyacinth's fate and can follow straight toward his goal, beset with doubts and confronted with obstacles, but essentially unwavering. Both Nick and Miriam, then, were determined to meet the ends they do: in both cases they followed an hereditary impetus. The environmental representatives of their mixed hereditary strains so contrived, in the ensuing struggle of the elements, to make clear to Miriam and Nick the right direction of their inmost passion.

The experiment of *The Tragic Muse* winds up with Peter Sherringham marrying, to the relief of all, Biddy Dormer. Miriam's marriage to

Dashwood is really little more than a symbolic representation of her marriage to her art; it changes nothing—as far as her pursuit of her passion is concerned. And Nick's finally painting Julia's portrait indicates to the careful reader that he has quite certainly decided to adhere to his true path of duty, to remain the celibate artist.[22]

A final word remains to be said about Peter, who is the catalyst in this double experiment. His connection with Miriam we have examined; we must consider a moment his connection with Nick. The two men are associated by their relation to "art" (see vol. VII, p. 254; vol. VIII, p. 109); and Peter's role is, finally, that of a foil to Nick in his struggle (as Miriam puts it) between God and Mammon: Peter has pursued a false god, Nick the true one. And so the complex experiment is done, and the conclusion to be drawn therefrom is an important Jamesian lesson; it is, indeed the lesson of the master.

James's trying what the mode of the *roman expérimental* would permit him concludes with his turning to the theatre at the end of the decade. The results of these two important experiments—with literary naturalism and with the theatre—are visible in the works of the "major phase." We have noted that while the principal characters of the novels (not to mention the accompanying tales) of the eighties were, under the demonstrable influence of their peculiar heredity and particular environments, determined to the fate they meet in their several stories; it is also apparent that these characters were not simply driven mechanically and brutally to their end, but that the forces involved worked on them in subtler ways. It is not so much the blind impetus of these forces, we saw, as the characters' *consciousness* of them that determined their lot. The *peripeteia* in each of these stories is (with classical correctness) nearly accompanied by the *anagnorisis*; and it is the latter that accounts for the denouement. The character is in these cases, as I have tried to show, not the less *determined* for his awareness of the forces; what is important to notice is that emphasis is increasingly placed on his awareness, on the character's consciousness of his situation—and this is most clearly exemplified in the case of Hyacinth Robinson. This emphasis tends to give the illusion of free will in the characters, the illusion that they exercise free choice. That such *is* an illusion, however, is explained by as "late" a character as Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*; he says of "the affair of life" that "it's at the best a tin mould, either fluted and embossed, with ornamental excrescences, or else smooth and dreadfully plain, into which, a helpless jelly, one's conscious-

ness is poured—so that one 'takes' the form, as the great cook says, and is more or less compactly held by it: one lives in fine as one can. Still, one has the illusion of freedom" (vol. XXI, p. 218). But it is, unmistakably, the drama of the character's consciousness that assumes increasing importance in James's work. We can see, I think, the way in which the experiment of the eighties has contributed to the work of the last period. The ultimate development, in *The Ambassadors*, is that our interest clearly is not so much in what the character sees, but rather in how he sees it, how he reacts to it, what it eventually makes of him. The drama of *The Ambassadors* is the drama of Strether's consciousness; but the matter in that consciousness—what Strether is conscious of—is, quite strictly, an impression of life as we wakingly know it, the illusion of reality solidly specified. James continued to the end to "hug the shore of the real." His experiment in literary naturalism produced results which, I believe, persist visibly in the works of his major phase. And it seems evident, finally, that his experience of the literary theories of Zola particularly, and of the "grandsons of Balzac" generally, was greatly responsible for James's experiment of the eighties.

notes

1 *Questions at Issue* (London 1893), 139; and *L'Influence du naturalisme français sur les romanciers anglais de 1885 à 1900* (Paris, 1925), 194–5.

2 *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) apparently looks, Janus-like, in two directions, backward to much that had preceded it in James's career, and forward toward what was soon to come; there are, however, a number of facts which, I think, quite clearly set the post-*Portrait* works apart. Consequently, I find it more meaningful and convenient to consider the *Portrait* as closing James's first period. The facts I refer to are these: (1) James's *Hawthorne* (1879) clearly sounds a note of farewell to early preoccupations and influences (cf. F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* [New York 1941], 293), and implicitly offers the possible solution of expatriation for the American artist; (2) the *Portrait* does belong to this early period, for James was at work on it during the closing months of 1877 at the latest (see the letter to his mother, March 1878, and cf. Leon Edel, ed., *Selected Letters of Henry James* [New York 1955], 52–3), and it is James's last treatment of the "international theme" (cf. *The Europeans*, *Daisy Miller*, and even *Washington Square*) for over two decades; (3) the deaths of George Eliot (1880) and Ivan Turgenev (1883), whom James had considered the two greatest living writers and whose works influenced the writing of the *Portrait*, perhaps encouraged James to turn to the most congenial of living writers—the group into which Turgenev had introduced him, *chez Flaubert*; (4) the deaths of both parents (1882), which further cut his ties to home and native land; and (5) the growing vogue of French Naturalism, 1880–1884; "The Art of Fiction" was published in 1884.

3 While I believe the influence of French Naturalism is of great importance in this period of James's development, I do not mean to suggest that it is the whole story, that it by any means completely accounts for the works of the eighties. My intention here is simply to consider the extent to which one aspect of that influence is discernible in the novels in question, and to suggest its contribution to James's major phase.

4 *Le Roman expérimental*, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1927–1929), XXXV, 26 and 24.

5 *Ibid.*, 16.

6 *Ibid.*, 25.

7 *Le Roman naturaliste* (Paris, 1893), 222.

8 *The Future of the Novel*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956), 92. Late in 1899 James referred to Zola's "heroic system" again, "to pay it publicly my respects. For it has been in its way an intellectual lesson. . . ." ("The Present Literary Situation in France," *North American Review*, CLXIX [Oct. 1899], 499.)

9 *Mes Haines*, *Œuvres*, XXX, 65.

10 See James's letter (Dec. 5, 1884) to R. L. Stevenson: "My pages, in *Longman* ["The Art of Fiction"] were simply a plea for liberty . . ." (*Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Janet Adam Smith [London, 1948], 102; cf. *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 vols. [New York, 1920], I, 110).

11 *Letters*, ed. Lubbock, I, 104; my italics.

12 I say "a flavour," for James was surely not interested in emulating those characteristics of Zola which provoked scandalized opposition in England.

13 In Virginia Harlow, *Thomas Sergeant Perry* (Durham, N. C., 1950), 316.

14 *The Bostonians* (New York, 1886), 114–15; all subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the text.

15 *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York, 1907–1917), V, 174–5, 177; subsequent references to the New York edition by volume and page number are given in the text.

16 Cf. V, 157, and Hyacinth's examining himself in the mirror of his room on his visit to Medley: "it seemed to him more than ever that Mademoiselle Vivier's son, lacking all the social dimensions, was scarce a perceptible person at all" (VI, 6).

17 *The Princess Casamassima* (and with it *The Bostonians*, perhaps) offers us James's fullest treatment of society and social movement. (Cf. Lionel Trilling, "The Princess Casamassima," *The Liberal Imagination* [New York, 1951].) One is reminded, in this regard, of Zola's words: "L'homme n'est pas seul, il vit dans une société, dans un milieu social, et dès lors pour nous, romanciers, le milieu social modifie sans cesse les phénomènes. Même notre grande étude est là, dans le travail réciproque de la société sur l'individu et de l'individu sur la société" (*Œuvres*, XXXV, 25).

18 See Nick's explanation to Nash of the force of "my family, my blood, my heredity, my traditions, my promises, my circumstances, my prejudices . . ." (VII, 180–1).

19 See VII, 305; Carteret speaks to Nick of his father, Sir Nicholas: "He said he should live on in you—he should work in you."

20 Cf. Nick's thoughts of Julia, VII, 263–4: "Mrs. Dallow . . . had suddenly become a still larger fact in his consciousness than his having turned actively political. She *was* indeed his being so . . . She had made the business infinitely prettier, . . . Converting it into a kind of heroic 'function,' *the form of sport* most dangerous. . . . She had wrapped him up in something—he didn't know what." Latter italics mine.

21 VII, 261 and 263; cf. VII, 75: more "sporting imagery" is used to express Nick's attitude to his political activity, see preceding footnote.

22 For a full explanation of this reading see my essay, "James's *The Tragic Muse—Ave Atque Vale*," *PMLA*, LXXIII (1958), 270–4.

DAVID H. STEWART

Absalom *Reconsidered*

William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* has been investigated rather thoroughly for formal structure and design. There is, of course, always room for further investigation, but it would seem that the basic patterns and literary devices are accurately enough described so that only minor revisions and additions are still possible. It is the meaning of the work which continues to provide a field for reflection and analysis. Agreeing with a critic's description of pattern and design in no way commits us to accept his ascription of meaning. We can and should always ask, "meaning for whom and when?" *Absalom* will mean one thing to the critic, who, in his anxious search for "roots," agrees with Faulkner's view of the essential grandeur and dignity (corrupted, to be sure) of the South, while it will mean something else to the critic who is preoccupied with structure or style or other literary devices; and it will mean a third thing to the critic who disagrees with Faulkner's view of Southern history and human nature.

Without refusing to acknowledge the technical excellences of the work, one may nonetheless insist that many of the claims made for *Absalom* by the critics are extravagant. One may indeed deplore the trend in Faulkner criticism which slights his Southern origin and presents him either as a prodigious technician or as a writer "concerned with profundities, . . . concerned with the soul of man laid bare," and which sees *Absalom* as a book involving "nearly all the human race," a book whose central active figure "is the modern tragic hero, insofar as art can represent him."[1] If *Absalom* suffered in the thirties from an excess of misdirected derogation, it suffered equally in the fifties from an excess of misdirected worship.

By describing in this essay what appear to be the three things which Faulkner intended to do when he wrote *Absalom*, I shall question the present tendency among critics to belittle the role of history in his work, to absolve him of any responsibility for the ideas expressed, and to

convert him exclusively into a builder of myths and archetypes. Second, by examining how he went about realizing his aims and by exhibiting some discrepancies between his intentions and methods, I shall in effect suggest that a disregard for historical and social reality and an uncritical indulgence of aesthetic experience have impaired many critical appraisals of *Absalom*. The novel was written not solely to investigate eternal human nature, but also to say something about the South and to persuade readers to say the same thing.

In *Absalom* Faulkner is evidently attempting three things. First, he seems to present a total picture of a full century of Southern history. Of this there can be little question; even if we did not know that Thomas Sutpen was modelled to some extent on an actual person, Alexander H. Pegues, the slightest acquaintance with Mississippi archives or historical journals demonstrates that everywhere and always historical actuality is at work in the Yoknapatawpha cycle.[2] Obviously abbreviation and selection are involved, but the residue of the total historical event which Faulkner presents seems to be calculated to contain or suggest totality. "Tell me about the South," Shreve McCannon asks. "What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all." (P. 174.)[3] The entire novel is the answer. The South, or at least Faulkner's portion of it, is precisely its own history and its own people. Nor is the novel merely a chronicle of events and a catalogue of individuals. It *is* these things but only as they are experienced in the lives of people. In the broadest sense, Faulkner is trying to portray the mind and conscience of the South as they were formed by environment and as they in turn influenced environment by interpreting it, by altering it, and by transmitting it together with themselves to succeeding generations. Not only literal history but the spirit of it or a legend about it calculated to convey this spirit seems to be one goal.

Second, Faulkner is attempting to describe certain conditions of the human mind and of human relations which are relatively permanent. Love, ambition, retribution, and so on (qualified, limited, and concretized by the society in which they occur) are of major importance. Relations between fathers and their sons, between a sister and her brothers, between a baronial feudal class and an enserfed class are exploited, though again they derive their significance not from being "eternal" but from being realized in and formed by a specific society. That is, although we have a

"peripheral" response to the quasi-incestuous aspect of Henry (or Charles Bon's) and Judith Sutpen's relationship *as a perennial theme*, our attention is "focused" precisely on the specific young, Southern Henry and the specific young, Southern Judith whose relationship is caused and given meaning by the conditions of life imposed upon them by their parents through heredity and by their social *milieu*. Relatively permanent conditions of the human mind and of human relations are present in *Absalom*. If they were not, the book would be purely history or an essay on the mind of the South instead of a novel. To place major emphasis on them, however, is to deprive the novel of the very quality which makes it a novel and a work of art, namely its concreteness, its commentary on a specific thing. The concrete inevitably precedes the universal in time, if for no other reason than that the reader must read the words before he can conceive the ideas, must perceive events before he can understand their significance.

Finally, *Absalom* is a kind of justification of the South. This is not to accuse Faulkner of saying the South is right and good. What Faulkner does seem to say is, this is the way we Southerners are. It is not our fault or anybody's fault. And the non-Southerner is expected, like Shreve, to understand and to accept just as a Southerner does. Indeed, in several places Faulkner tries to make all men one; that is, all men Southerners, hence indebted to and responsible for the Southern tradition. Quentin Compson thinks: "*Yes we are both* [Quentin himself and his father] *Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us.*" (Pp. 261–2.) The question is, who are the "we" in whom Quentin (and Faulkner)[4] wants to embrace "all of us"?

How does Faulkner attempt to do the three things I have listed? He presents the historical study of Thomas Sutpen through a series of personalized chronicles, each of which describes and interprets some portion of the life and works of the Sutpen family. Single events are almost always witnessed by the reader through the eyes of several characters, a device which gives added dimension to the events portrayed because their multiple consequences are considerably expanded in the concrete experience of several people living at different times. At the same time the device provides characterization for the *dramatis personae* in relation to a fixed point and furnishes numerous parallel responses and interpretations for comparison or contrast.

Alone, the device is not unusual. Smollet, Dostoyevsky, and Thornton Wilder used it. Faulkner's innovation is that he compresses or telescopes his chronicles and adapts them to the stream-of-consciousness technique. They are fused into a single consciousness and lose at least part of their individuality and independence, the point being, apparently, that the basis of historical perspective is Quentin Compson's (or Faulkner's) consciousness of it.[5] That this view is rather generally accepted in the novel may be seen, for example, in Rosa Coldfield's compulsion to transmit her version of the Sutpen story to Quentin who she assumes may be appropriately inclined and well enough educated to record it. Quentin's father too makes a point of transmitting his version to his son. It is as if Quentin had some special, mysterious commission to preserve the story.[6] In any case, Quentin's consciousness is the passive container in which the story lives on. Quentin's mind *is* the South. Before Quentin it was the mind of Mr. Compson or Rosa Coldfield or even Thomas Sutpen himself, imposing a subjective "design" on his entire world. The South seems to have no objective reality of its own, which perhaps accounts for the legendary quality of the entire novel.

There are those who hold that the various chronicles in *Absalom*, far from being dissolved in the consciousness of Quentin, live their own independent lives, indeed that the strength of *Absalom* derives from the precise and tangible individuality which each chronicle possesses.[7] It is possible, for example, to deal with the narrators as distinct units, each with his own insights and limitations and each providing a different but indispensable aspect of the whole story. Such an interpretation is further enhanced by the author's personal intervention at the end (pp. 351–8) to enunciate the correct motivation for one of the novel's central events, Henry Sutpen's murder of Charles Bon, a device which creates the illusion that the various chroniclers in the novel each presented this motivation independently and inaccurately and which at the same time demonstrates that Quentin's consciousness alone does not contain the full story. In fact, Faulkner makes Quentin's deficiency explicit (p. 280).

This stratagem, however, far from invalidating the point that the South's reality is confined to a mere consciousness of it, merely transfers that consciousness at the end from Quentin to Faulkner. Southern history which was at first Rosa's impression of it, then Mr. Compson's, then Quentin's, finally becomes Faulkner's. In other words, what seem first to be examples of individuation are presently dissolved into a larger con-

sciousness. Behind all of Faulkner's speculative characters is their master-dreamer or master-ventriloquist; they all speak in Faulkner's own heavy Latinate voice.[8] Time, instead of being a process and a sequence with objective periods, is still a compressed instant, all *illusions* to the contrary notwithstanding.

It is of course not surprising that a young Southern student at Harvard trying to indoctrinate his Canadian classmate, or that a Southern novelist trying to manipulate his reader's consciousness, should adopt the "telescope" device for dealing with history. By making all the events of a century occur simultaneously in the mind, Quentin and Faulkner can dominate them absolutely, can relish each instant indefinitely in a chronological deep-freeze, can impose upon them almost any meaning. And who can dispute them when before our eyes in the image of Quentin (and Faulkner) stands the living, tangible proof? Quentin *is* what he has described. And if Quentin exists, so does Quentin's South.

This evidently is what Faulkner asks us to believe. We are encouraged to share Shreve's conversion from incredulity to acceptance. Witness the ingenious fusion of Quentin and Shreve (that is, of a Southerner and a Northerner but not a Yankee, hence more objective): first "it was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them, . . . it might have been either of them and was in a sense both . . ." (p. 303). Later ". . . it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone which did it, performed and accomplished the overpassing, but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing . . ." (p. 316). Finally, "Shreve ceased again. It was just as well, since he had no listener. Perhaps he was aware of it. Then suddenly he had no talker either, though possibly he was not aware of this. Because now neither of them were there. They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago. . . ." (P. 351.)

Absalom was devised, among other things, to sustain new Quentins to produce future Shreves who will, if not love, at least suspend judgment on the South and accept the notion that the South is what it must be. The difficulty, however, of an uncritical acceptance of the fusion of characters is that it leads to a view of Southern history which is illusory and demonstrably defective. The extreme subjectivity of Faulkner's method contradicts the novel's pretence to history. While one cannot, of course, object to a contempt for historical minutiae (pp. 220–1) or even to deliberate fabrication of details (p. 335) in a novel, one may well find frequent

distorted evaluations of history inadmissible. For example, Faulkner says through Rosa Coldfield (and nowhere corrects the remark) that the South was defeated not by Yankee strategy and numbers ("not by a victorious army") but through a flaw by which Southern society was marred (slavery) and through "generals . . . who should not have been generals . . . who were generals not through training or aptitude . . . but, by divine right to say 'Go there' conferred upon them by an absolute caste system" (p. 345).

This is simply inaccurate. Actually Southern generals seem if anything to have had more training and aptitude than their Northern counterparts, so that Confederate armies enjoyed superior leadership almost all through the war. Lee, the Johnstons, Longstreet, Forrest, and Jackson fought for Dixie. Furthermore, it is difficult to say that the South's worst social flaw, namely slavery, was such a military liability that it caused the South's defeat. While the Emancipation Proclamation and the threat of coloured uprisings were hard on white morale and kept detachments of militia at home, it is also true that many slaves continued to work, releasing whites for duty in the line.[9]

The argument that the war was lost because of something defective in the South is rather like the argument that Germany lost World War I because she was stabbed from within by Jews or World War II because God disapproves of Naziism. It is a refusal to concede the enemy's superiority both physically and as an historical agent. It is the uncritical sharing of Shreve's conversion to the Southern attitude.

Faulkner's second general purpose, his attempt at deeper, more permanent meanings in *Absalom*, is conducted in several ways. First, he depicts his central active character as a man of superhuman dimension. To Aunt Rosa, a woman of some rank in the class structure, as well as to Shreve, he is a demon. To Wash Jones, a man below the lowest class level, he is a god. Indeed the demon and the god are often deliberately fused, for example when Sutpen walks through town to negotiate his marriage (p. 47) or when he emerges finally from Jones's cabin to his death (p. 288). What Faulkner seems to be doing is making Sutpen represent some sort of grand human force; he is irrepressible Will wresting a monument to itself from the wilderness. He is perhaps mankind which, though it can err, cannot be diverted from its designs. Faulkner very carefully identifies one character after another with Sutpen: Quentin (p. 280), Wash Jones (pp. 282, 287), Charles Bon (pp. 339, 341—he repeats Sutpen's words), all Southern men (p. 289), all men (p. 247).

In addition Sutpen is the Hebrew David, but this parallel is unfortunate. There is so much difference between the Biblical story as a whole and *Absalom* that one wonders why Faulkner used it. (Cf. II Samuel, chaps. 13–18.) Evidently the hope was that Sutpen might gain dignity and stature by the comparison. The truth is, however, that Sutpen is a virtual contradiction of David, especially in terms of the historical forces which each represents.

> Next to Moses, who created the Hebrew nation, David was the greatest man Israel had yet produced. He was the real creator of the monarchy. He perfected the Hebrew national unity. . . . He founded *the* royal line, and though the kingdom was disrupted after the death of his son Solomon, there never failed on the throne of Judah a king of the Davidic line so long as that kingdom lasted, except during the brief usurpation by Queen Athaliah.[10]

Sutpen, on the other hand, is ultimately an historical failure. And to say that Faulkner is being consciously ironic is hardly satisfactory, for Sutpen is no J. Alfred Prufrock systematically contrasted with great men of the past.

Second, Faulkner at times uses names which at least sound symbolic. Sutpen's negro daughter is called Clytemnestra, and a good deal is made of this name because it may have been a mistaken substitute for Cassandra. Both names are exploited for their traditional values of rejection or prophecy of doom. It is possible that the name Coldfield is expected to communicate something about the puritanical, frigid family to which it belongs and about the tradition which the family signifies. The shift in the name of Sutpen's coloured male issue from Bon to Bond ("good" to "link," "tie" or "covenant") may also mean something.

Third, Faulkner makes a point of suggesting (through Mr. Compson) that his characters may fall into an archetypal pattern. "Have you noticed," says Jason, "how so often when we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women, how with a sort of astonishment we find ourselves now and then reduced to the belief, the only possible belief, that they stemmed from some of the old virtues? the thief who steals not for greed but for love, the murderer who kills not out of lust but pity?" (P. 121.) When relating the story of Charles Bon's life, Shreve describes the "vindictiveness and jealous rage" which Charles absorbed unconsciously from his mother who was obsessed after Sutpen cast her off.

> So that when he grew up and had children he would have to pass it on too [the fatherlessness and rage] . . . and hence no man had a father, no one personal Porto Rico or Haiti, but all mother faces which ever bred swooping down at those almost calculable moments out of some obscure ancient general affronting and outraging which the actual

> living articulate meat had not even suffered but merely inherited; all boy flesh that walked and breathed stemming from that one ambiguous eluded dark fatherhead and so brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun. (P. 299.)

Later, Henry reduces human motivation to an even lower denominator when he thinks of all Southerners at war's end as people crushed and derelict: "Not only no land to make food out of but no need for the food and when you dont have God and honor and pride, nothing matters except that there is the old mindless meat that dont even care if it was defeat or victory, that wont even die, that will be out in the woods and fields, grubbing up roots and weeds" (p. 354).

The trouble is that one cannot be certain what results from all this archetypicality and symbolism. As elements of a portion of the novel's scaffolding, they do provide that ambiguity which has found so much favour among the New Critics. For anything beyond this, for any active function, they are not used. No one steals for love; no one kills for pity, not even excepting Wash Jones in whom pity is diluted by a desire for vengeance. Henry Sutpen does not murder Charles because the one is Cain and the other Abel (or Absalom and Amnon). Charles is murdered because he has negro blood and threatens miscegenation. Charles decides to wed Judith not because she is the eternal female or even the eternal sister (Amnon raped Tamar for one or both of these reasons) but because she is the daughter of Thomas Sutpen whom he wishes to injure for withholding acknowledgment. And Clytie, who is handled rather deftly and consistently as a symbol of rejection in the novel, never hatches any dark Mycenaean plots or presides (Cassandra-like) over the collapse of a renowned state.[11] Unfortunately, in Faulkner's books coloured people can do little, except endure or at best make trouble.

And what of the red-headed titan Thomas Sutpen? What is he if not a glorification of the acquisitive instinct, a poor white in a land which provided a frontier to move to where he could imitate rich whites? Spurned by a negro butler from the front door of a Tidewater mansion as a child, he realizes that direct vengeance upon the negro is futile ("*there ain't any good or harm either in the living world that I can do to him*") since he is not the cause. It is wealth, a class of people: when young Sutpen substituted "*them* in place of *he* or *him*, it meant more than all the human puny mortals under the sun that might lie in hammocks all afternoon with their shoes off" (p. 238). This is the thought that sets Sutpen in motion. " 'So to combat them you have got to have what they have that made them do what the man did. You got to have land and niggers and

a fine house to combat them with you see?' and he said Yes again. He left that night." (P. 238.)

This is indeed a strange vehicle in which to convey the Will of humanity. Sutpen's "design" is after all a grotesque and shabby mockery of Southern culture and any other culture. Beyond all the subjective thunder and rhetoric about the demon-God, we can trace the visage of the frontier bully, or, as the psychologist might say, of the "over-motivated" poor boy grown rich, a Dixieland Gatsby.

That Faulkner vaguely recognized this is indicated by his permitting Sutpen only three virtues (innocence, courage, and shrewdness) and by the end which he fashions for him. Nonetheless, he permits Sutpen to stand for some kind of admirable grandeur; Sutpen may be intended as a new, fallen Adam or even, like Hamlet, the "cursed instrument" of Providential machinations. He is, for example, one among few white men in Faulkner's works who is superior to negroes in endurance. When the Haitian slaves revolted and tortured him, he bore "more than they believed any bones and flesh could or should . . . maybe at last they themselves turning in horror and fleeing from the white arms and legs shaped like theirs and from which blood could be made to spurt and flow as it could from theirs and containing an indomitable spirit which should have come from the same primary fire which theirs came from but which could not have, could not possibly have" (p. 254).

Thus Sutpen is treated as a monumental (though erring) creature. He is not quite, however, a great tragic hero, an independent being broken by surrounding conditions (like Lear or Oedipus) despite his vast ability and aspiration, as he is sometimes presented.[12] Sutpen was never independent. So completely was he a slave to a social pattern, or rather to a gaudy imitation of it, that he never achieved a recognition of his own life's meaning. As for his vast abilities and aspirations, one can only say that they were no larger than those of any other American "Empire Builder." In fact Sutpen had rather less vision than Major DeSpain or even John Sartoris. The splendid seventh section of *Absalom*, with its frequent insistence on social (not archetypal) determinism and individual (not anagogic) responsibility, demonstrates that here at least Faulkner too for a moment saw Sutpen for what he was, but this section is obscured by the subjective effusions surrounding it.

We come now to Faulkner's justification of the South which results first from Quentin's role as narrator (he must vindicate his land before Shreve), and second from Faulkner's search for archetypal motivations.

He accomplishes his justification by resorting to what might be called a mediaeval conception of the universe and man. Not the blind forces of nature are dominant but a power which contains nature. Various members of *Absalom*'s caste call it destiny, fatality, chance, mischance, or accident. Each character sees (and the reader is evidently expected to see) Thomas Sutpen as something more than a man, more than the product of environment, sometimes God, sometimes demon, depending on the point of view. The South is more than her history and people: she is a playground for eternal forces. No chance is lost to dissolve or conceal that which is Southern in the "universal human condition." That is to say, Faulkner avoids the determinism so often met in modern fiction which postulates the Rousseauist and Freudian illusion of man as naturally free or good but caught in the toils of bad institutions.

Faulkner employs a fatalism which makes no distinction between nature and man whatever. Jason Compson, whose view would be shared by others, though less articulately and rationally expressed, says that one "would almost believe that Sutpen's trip to New Orleans was just sheer chance, just a little more of the illogical machinations of a fatality which had chosen that family in preference to any other in the county or the land exactly as a small boy chooses one ant-hill to pour boiling water into in preference to any other, not even himself knowing why" (p. 102).

Even in Faulkner's imagery a reader will often be confronted with this fatalistic identification of man and nature in the hands of destiny. Ellen Sutpen "had bloomed, as if Fate were crowding the normal Indian summer which should have bloomed gradually and faded gracefully through six or eight years, into three or four, either for compensation for what was to come or to clear the books, pay the check to which Fate's wife, Nature, had signed his name" (p. 68). Thomas Sutpen "was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony—the stage manager, call him what you will—was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one" (pp. 72–3). The very moment when he had reached the peak of his powers was "the instant which Fate always picks out to blackjack you . . ." (p. 240).

So permeated is *Absalom* with this conception that virtually every main character expresses it directly. Quentin believes that "*maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished*"; every occurrence is like ripples on water

moving forever "*to the old ineradicable rhythm*" (p. 261). Judith thinks people are moved like marionettes; they try to act but succeed merely in mimicking old patterns so that in the end they vanish entirely. Even the "scratches" on their headstones erode away "and it doesn't matter" (p. 122). Jason's account of Sutpen's family in 1860 (pp. 73–74) is still more indicative:

> . . . the destiny of Sutpen's family which for twenty years now had been like a lake welling from quiet springs into a quiet valley and spreading, rising almost imperceptibly and in which the four members of it floated in sunny suspension, felt the first subterranean movement toward the outlet, the gorge which would be the land's catastrophe too, and the four peaceful swimmers turning suddenly to face one another, not yet with alarm or distrust but just alert, feeling the dark set, none of them yet at that point where man looks about at his companions in disaster and thinks When will I stop trying to save them and save only myself? and not even aware that that point was approaching.

Thus man and nature together slide along toward catastrophe, entirely helpless. Given this view, there is little else to do but accept or at least submit.[13] The South and its people were pushed from behind by some blind force; objection or condemnation are therefore futile. What better justification could be devised? With responsibility abjured, even the possibility of judgment is precluded.

For this reason one is distressed to find Faulkner falsely ascribing free volition to, of all people, Charles Bon's faintly black son who alone is held responsible and in a sense condemned for the agony which not he but his environment clearly brought upon him. When Judith deigned to let him call her "aunt," young Charles turned and went away with her eyes upon him "watching him, still seeing him, penetrating walls and darkness too to watch him walk back down the weedy lane between the deserted collapsed cabins toward that one where his wife waited, treading the thorny and flint-paved path toward the Gethsemane which he had decreed and created for himself, where he had crucified himself and come down from his cross for a moment and now returned to it" (p. 209).

In addition to fatalism, Faulkner also suggests briefly that "love" might accomplish the goal of acceptance for those who find fatality unsatisfactory.[14] These are the two alternatives which Faulkner seems to provide: either accept what must be without judgment, or learn to love and pardon. Faulkner interrupts the dialogue between Quentin and Shreve to make his plea: there occurred "some happy marriage of speaking and hearing wherein each before the demand, the requirement, forgave condoned and forgot the faulting of the other—faultings both in the creating

of his shade whom they discussed (rather, existed in) and in the hearing and sifting and discarding the false and conserving what seemed true, or fit the preconceived—in order to overpass to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency but nothing fault nor false" (p. 316).

Such an attractive solution would be excellent if there were anything in the novel to justify it. Unfortunately, love plays a less significant role in *Absalom* than in almost any other Faulkner novel. With a single exception (Sutpen's dramatic but almost incredible meeting with Henry in Colonel Willow's tent [p. 353]), there is no love at all. Dog-like devotion there is in quantity (Henry for Charles, Clytie for every Sutpen); perverted attraction there is (Rosa for Charles), and a sick dedication to the Lost Cause; but not love. Even in the relationship between Judith and Charles, love is doubtful since Judith's own mother did not acknowledge it (p. 75) and since Quentin, who knows more about the whole story than anyone, repeatedly denies its presence (pp. 322, 328) despite his father's and Shreve's assumption that it existed (pp. 206, 316).

That Faulkner and Quentin should seek to justify their own heritage is hardly surprising. Again, however, one cannot accept their position without reservations since it leads to serious distortions. They are capable, for example, of minimizing the difference between white and black thus: ". . . only in the surface matter of food and clothing and daily occupation [were white gentlemen] any different from the negro slaves who supported them—the same sweat, the only difference being that on the one hand it went for labor in fields where on the other it went as the price of the spartan and meager pleasures which were available to them because they did not have to sweat in the fields . . ." (p. 97).

This is a Spartan citizen telling the Helot, "Look, we are really alike; now you go cultivate olive orchards (or cotton) while I dance with the ladies and hunt boars (or coon)." One is inclined, moreover, to question a system of values which gives us Velery Bons and Jim Bonds as examples of the evil produced by Southern institutions and Clyties as examples of virtue, without at the same time noting that Thomas Sutpen's black male issue deserves some credit for disrupting the vicious design of Yoknapatawpha life while Clytie merely broods and endures. If we accept the passive, impotent illusion that the South is what it must be and can be no other, then of course we must admit that violent, aggressive, or moronic negroes are evil or shameful while docile, patient ones are good. If, on the other hand, we accept the positive, active illusion that love solves or

reconciles the maddening dilemmas of Yoknapatawpha life, we have still done no more than justify that life as it is.

The disparity between the historical-symbolic pretensions of *Absalom* and the crabbed vision of reality which Faulkner's methods lead to and justify is disturbing to the critic who doubts a past as splendid or a future as bleak as *Absalom* indicates. To play the game with Shreve McCannon, to share the consciousness and the point of view of sterile Coldfields and Compsons may be aesthetically thrilling because of their magnificent rhetoric and because of the unquestionable suggestiveness and intensity of the structure and style of *Absalom, Absalom!*; yet we should perhaps inquire, however reluctantly, of our indoctrinator, "Whither bound?"

notes

1 Randall Stewart, *American Literature and the Christian Tradition*, a pamphlet in the third series of Faculty Papers on Christian Perspectives in University Life, The National Council, Episcopal Church (New York, 1955), 17; Harry M. Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, *William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal* (Norman, 1951), 75; Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *PMLA*, LXX (Dec., 1955), 907.

2 Ward Miner, *The World of William Faulkner* (Durham, N.C., 1952), 95. Of many works which indicate the presence of history in Faulkner and which provide interesting parallels with his fiction, some of the more interesting are: "Mississippi Unionism: The Case of the Rev. James A. Lyon," ed. John K. Bettersworth, *The Journal of Mississippi History*, I (Jan., 1939), 37–52 [*Light in August*]; "Notes and Documents, the Civil War Letters of Cordelia Scales," ed. Percy L. Rainwater, *The Journal of Mississippi History*, I (July, 1939), 169–81 [*The Unvanquished*]; "The Life of a Southern Plantation Owner During Reconstruction as Revealed in the Clay Sharkey Papers," ed. George C. Osborn, *The Journal of Mississippi History*, VI (Jan., 1944), 103–12 [*The Unvanquished*]; "Diary of a Miss. Planter, Jan. 1, 1840 to April, 1863," ed. F. R. Riley, *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, X (Oxford, 1909), 305–481 ["The Bear"]; Mrs. N. D. Deupree, "Greenwood LeFlore," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, VII (Oxford, 1903), 141–51 [*Requiem for a Nun*]; "The Trial of Tishomingo," *The Journal of Mississippi*, II (July, 1940), 147–55 [Faulkner's Indian tales].

The presence of current Southern social problems in Faulkner's work is perhaps best illustrated by comparing the novels with Allison Davis, Burleigh B. and Mary R. Gardner, *Deep South, A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago, 1941).

3 All references are to the Modern Library edition, 1951.

4 I join the two names advisedly. George Marion O'Donnell calls Faulkner "the Quentin Compson or Bayard Sartoris of modern fiction" ("Faulkner's Mythology," *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed., Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery [Lansing, Mich., 1954], 62). Irving Howe also acknowledges the author's importance in this novel: "Because the material of *Absalom, Absalom!* was so oppressively close to Faulkner, he had to find a device by which to hold it, so to speak, in suspension; and that device . . . was Gothic. Sutpen's destruction was a paradigm of the homeland's fate; his career brought to light the darkest promptings of his will—with what fascinated exasperation and at what cost did Faulkner approach this material?" (*William Faulkner: A Critical Study* [New York, 1952], 161.)

5 Faulkner's interpretation of history is undoubtedly idealistic ; not only does he assert the central assumptions of this position artistically (e.g. in *Intruder in the Dust* he writes, ". . . yesterday today and tomorrow are is: Indivisible"), evidently he accepts the position personally. "Beginning with *Sartoris* I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing

about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a gold mine of other peoples, so I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too. The fact that I have moved my characters around in time successfully . . . proves to me my own theory that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as *was*—only *is*." (Jean Stein, "William Faulkner, The Art of Fiction," *The Paris Review*, IV [Spring, 1956], 52.)

6 Faulkner's "centres of consciousness" very frequently convey this impression. Witness Gail Hightower and Gavin Stevens whose special duty it is to preside over the social conscience. And Ike McCaslin is divinely appointed to his mission of social salvation, while Bayard Sartoris is only self-appointed in *The Unvanquished*. As in Dostoyevsky or Camus, so in Faulkner there is an element of conservative social messianism—which may well explain his popularity in the United States and France.

7 Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," in Hoffman and Vickery, *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, 1957.

8 Cf. *ibid.*, 161; Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 166; and Edgar W. Whan, "*Absalom, Absalom!* as Gothic Myth," *Perspectives*, III (Autumn, 1950), 199.

9 Even the two books from which we might expect the most convincing evidence for the claim that slavery defeated the South fail to provide anything conclusive: Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro in the Civil War* (New York, 1938); Joseph Cephus Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States 1800–1865* (Boston, 1938). For a more authoritative statement, see John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, 1943), 161–5.

10 Elmer W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York, 1939), 191.

11 Faulkner too recognized that Sutpen's Hundred was not the great achievement it might seem. In the story, "An Odor of Verbena," (written after *Absalom*), Bayard Sartoris says that no one could have more of a dream than Sutpen. His stepmother corrects him: "Yes. But his dream is just Sutpen." And she adds that Bayard's father has a greater dream. "He is thinking of the whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps. . . ."

12 See Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 56; Lind, "The Design and Meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*," 907; and Walter J. Sullivan, "The Tragic Design of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, L (Oct., 1951), 552–6.

13 From a different angle Conrad Aiken reached a similar conclusion about the effect of *Absalom* on a reader: ". . . in *Absalom, Absalom!* . . . one may say the form is really circular—there is no beginning and no ending properly speaking, and therefore no *logical* point of entrance: we must just submit, and follow the circling of the author's interest, which turns a light inward toward the centre, but every moment from a new angle . . ." ("William Faulkner: the Novel as Form," in Hoffman and Vickery, *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, 145).

14 Cf. Joshua McClennen, "*Absalom, Absalom!* and the Meaning of History," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, XLII (Ann Arbor, 1957), 365–6. Cleanth Brooks is perhaps too generous in finding quantities of love in Henry and Judith Sutpen. "*Absalom, Absalom!*: The Definition of Innocence," *Sewanee Review*, LIX (Autumn, 1951), 551–3.

ALLAN BRICK

Equilibrium in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold

The usual effect of Victorian poetry is to prove that a truth exists, that the search for it must be unrelenting, and that its very attainment promotes a further search for a more ultimate truth—*ad infinitum*. This search is the penetration of self, an interior journey on which the individual draws away from the world of appearance, from the encrustations of social personality and ever closer to innermost reality. Like Shelley and Coleridge, the major Victorians express themselves in terms of idealist philosophy; their poetic form schematizes the self into subject-object relationships. If, as compared with their predecessors, they seem to be more distant from the individual consciousness, more interested in the neat recounting of "stories," on closer examination one finds the "stories" are dramatizations for philosophical inculcation.

In *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, all individuals and objects may be readily understood as dramatic correlatives for the forces and attitudes at work within the mind. The freeing of Prometheus symbolizes the freeing, through the painful process of conciousness, of the innermost Understanding. The relationship between the Wedding Guest and the importunate Mariner who has journeyed into spiritual reality and is now returned to make his report is essentially the relationship between normal perception and Kantian Apperception; for in hearing the story retold the ego is jolted out of its adventitious social pose and, in uniting with the Mariner on the continually recurring voyage, is moved ever deeper into the spirit power in which all ego is grounded.

Tennyson's *Maud* seems closely analogous to the *Rime* in its recounting of the various stages of madness through which the consciousness must pass before it can exchange malaise in the world of phenomena for spiritual health through idealist vision. *In Memoriam* and Browning's *Saul*

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examine this process in the perspective of *Prometheus Unbound* by dramatizing the resurrection of the Understanding; the raising of the Christ in both *In Memoriam* and *Saul* is achieved by the same self-revelatory suffering that frees Prometheus. Tennyson moves between hope and despair, each cycle more and more intense, until he envisions the dead Hallam resurrected with the living Christ and feels that all "the truths that never can be proved" are proved as "we close with all we loved/And all we flow from, soul in soul" (*In Memoriam*, CXXIX); in Kantian terms, phenomenal appearance has fallen away to reveal a glimpse of noumenal reality. In *Saul*, after an upward spiralling between reason and faith, the individual ego attains its "unity of Apperception" and thence for an instant recognizes its fusion with the noumenal reality essential to all things.

Browning is actually a more complete idealist than Tennyson, for he admits of no objectivity at all in that one eternal moment of conversion, even though he shows that objectivity and the world of appearance more or less return as the ego slips back into the limitations of normal, everyday consciousness. Whereas for Browning the ego can fuse with reality in the moment of conversion, for Tennyson ultimate reality may be glimpsed now only as a vision, and not fully attained until some future time. For Tennyson there is even at the deepest point of penetration into the self an inescapable tension between the transcending subject and the existential personality, and thus a necessary separation between the striver and the goal. For both Browning and Tennyson the journey of penetration, which has culminated in either complete transcendence or at least a glimpse of impending reality, entails heightened consciousness for the ego on its return to normal life. The reward is an increased ability to sense the transcendent reality behind all individual perceptions, to synthesize the fragmentary objects of everyday consciousness. Thus the resultant condition of Browning's David, emerging fresh from his union with the essential Saul, is sustained conversion:

> Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
> Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
> In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
> In the shuddering forests' new awe; in the sudden wind-thrills;
> In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
> Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
> That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe!
> E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new Law.
> The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;

> The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the vine-bowers;
> And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
> With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"
>
> (*Saul*, XIX)

Matthew Arnold rejects the assertion that the "outer world" (both as physical and as conceptual phenomena) exists only in relation to a transcendental power which focuses through a perceiving ego. Thus he does not, like Shelley, Coleridge, Tennyson, and Browning, write poetry in which all setting, characters, and events serve to dramatize the structure and function of the ego. He does not imagine, for example, that the appearance of the woods, hills, and animals in his poem depends upon the perceiving consciousness of the hero, whose movement through them is correlative to the subject ego's penetration into itself as objective envelopment. For Arnold, rather than the ego transforming—even determining—the appearance of the "outer world," quite the reverse is true: the ego is impinged upon by that outer reality which it foolishly, tragically, pretends to dominate. Arnold insists that there is an objective reality over which man's will has no control—an amoral Nature which is not man's friend nor his foe nor in any way cognizant of him, and which subjects him to the rules of change and death. While recognizing that it is natural for man to persist in the illusion that he can understand or even contain "reality," Arnold reveals a world thoroughly independent of the "dreams" which constitute human consciousness. He berates Clough for his unavailing struggle to contain all reality within some recognizable structure of his own ego:

> You ask me in what I think or have thought you going wrong: in this: that you would never take your assiette as something determined final and unchangeable for you and proceed to work away on the basis of that: but were always poking and patching and cobbling at the assiette itself—could never finally, as it seemed—"resolve to be thyself"—but were looking for this and that experience, and doubting whether you ought not to adopt this or that mode of being of persons qui ne vous valaient pas because it might possibly be nearer the truth than your own: you had no reason for thinking it *was*, but it *might* be—and so you would try to adapt yourself to it.[1]

Arnold tries to show this idealist *par excellence* that there is a definite stance to be assumed, a position to be held: "You are too content to *fluctuate*—to be ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth. This is why, with you, I feel it necessary to stiffen myself—and hold fast my rudder."[2] Arnold seeks a point of balance between activity and repose.

Most of his poems deal with an individual whose stance is already determined; they merely define that stance and its implications. Arnold's lonely individual is denied the idealist potentiality of joining "soul in soul," of joining (in the manner of Browning and Tennyson) with a noumenal reality essential to all men. In "A Republican Friend" the idealist who subordinates outer reality to the human will is portrayed as a man of social action who believes he can make a better world; but the narrator in the poem reduces this social idealist to a political activist: one who pretends foolishly that he can strive for a utopian goal untainted by the "lust, avarice, envy" of worldly existence. Thus Arnold's individual, with the perspective of this narrator, makes his first step in the process of self-consciousness, or rather of "reality"-consciousness: withdrawal from society. This step is more or less complete before the time of the poem. Arnold's individual sympathizes with the purposes of "A Republican Friend," saying, "I am yours, and what you feel I share,"[3] but at the same time admits that activism, even if admirable, is delusive. He steps away from his friend (p. 7)—as from the activist self of his own past—

> Seeing this vale, this earth, whereon we dream,
> Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high
> Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,
> Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.

Recognizing the idealist arrogance of that other self, he admits that human beliefs are illusory and human efforts fruitless. Yet it is only as double-self that he is human; man's life must circle paradoxically between resolute withdrawal and credulous activism, for even in making the effort to cut away he increases the tension with his existence as foolish hero. Seduced into a desire to rejoin, to receive the bodily investment of, the worldly self, he must increase the puritanical vigour of his rejection.

Thus Arnold's individual is profoundly bohemian (p. 7), intensely anti-bourgeois, sharing thoroughly the despite republicans hold for

> The barren optimistic sophistries
> Of comfortable moles, whom what they do
> Teaches the limit of the just and true.

But he insists that the republicans, in freeing themselves from the somnolent blindness of ordinary men, pretend far too much vision. How can they be so foolish as to believe they can acquire sure knowledge about

and then impose changes upon complex world realities? "To an ambitious friend" he says (p. 47),

> Omit, omit my simple friend,
> Still to enquire how parties tend,
> Or what we fix with foreign powers.
> If France and we are really friends,
> And what the Russian Czar intends,
> Is no concern of ours;

and he warns that such social buzzing falls far below life's better task, the crowning of Eugenia's hair with rose garlands. Yet Arnold does not make this point final—as does the idealist Browning of "Love among the Ruins"; for fair Eugenia might very well be scornful, and then it would be best to consider what time and change will do to her beauty and your desire. Thus idealist absolutes are as impossible in the romantic sphere as in the political.

For Arnold the discovery of reality is the discovery of self *vis à vis* the outer world; it comes at a point of equilibrium between, on the one hand, engagement in society, in love, in ideals and, on the other, isolation from action, from passion, from principle, indeed, from life itself. Neither the self nor the outer world are noumena which can be seen into or, except in the most limited and exterior manner, understood; and this fact can force man either to accept oversimplified forms (illusions) in place of reality, or to despair of imposing upon complex existence any forms whatsoever. At a point of equilibrium man must develop the humility and the strength to "hold his rudder fast" against winds that would blow him to either side.

King Mycerinus, with only six years to live, decides his notions of religion and justice are illusory forms, "mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart." and abandons them, along with the entire context of social existence, to find what meagre reality he can in "the silence of the groves and woods" (p. 10). His withdrawal is to be neither a retirement nor an escape, but a modest affirmation. In the woods, however, he enters upon an endless cycle of satiation and desire, thus replacing the illusions of social activism and religious belief with those of hedonist indulgence. There, as before, he discovers that every perceived phenomenon, every presumed reality, disappears precisely at the instant of possession—that every "feast" insofar as it occurs is gone, leaving no sustaining after taste. It is at this point that Mycerinus, having learned the full lesson about

idealist participation, might be imagined to feel the need for a more ultimate withdrawal (p. 11).

> It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
> From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
> Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
> Who wrestles with a dream; as some pale shape
> Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,
> Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,
> Whispering: *A little space, and thou art mine*!

Thus "it may be" that there is no ultimate withdrawal save death, and that the King does well to continue in sensual indulgence, struggling to confine beneath smooth brow and clear laugh his fear of that sole reality. Or "it may be" that for the brief interval before death, even as the feasting continues, Mycerinus pauses inwardly to "take measure of his soul," and is thereby "calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd." In the darkness, peering at the noumenon of self, the poet cannot assert anything definite. All he can do is chronicle from a distance Mycerinus' problem, and speculate on the existence of a solution. The poem ends in mystery, as Arnold represents the impossibility of narrator and audience ever discovering anything about noumenal Mycerinus—the impossibility of the ego ever discovering anything essential about itself and what surrounds it (p. 12):

> And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
> Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
> To tell his wondering people of their king;
> In the still night, across the steaming flats,
> Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

Mycerinus' inward projection of withdrawal itself provides the point of view in "A Modern Sappho." The narrator, Sappho, personifies that subject ego which struggles to hold fast the rudder, now against the force of participation and later against the force of death. At the moment the force of participation, her lover, dominates the entire ego; Sappho (helpless at the helm, as it were) must sit resolutely longing for the proper balance. The lover, like "a republican friend," and like Mycerinus engaged in fleeting pleasures, is now impassioned over the world of illusion: the young and sensuous other woman. Sappho, in torture, awaits the day when time will conquer this love, allowing her hero to be drawn to her.

Then, dominating, she may effect for the entire ego an interval of essential equilibrium between the passion of life and the dissolution of death. The torturing mystery lies in the question whether or not such an interval can exist; can there be before death *any* life other than that of a sensual, passionate, self-deluded lover? For it is possible that her very longing is in its violence an uncontrollable impulsion toward death, and that the supposed point of balance, once reached, cannot be held (p. 20):

> —Let my turn, if it *will* come, be swift in arriving!
> Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments like these.
> Hast thou yet dealt him, O life, thy full measure?
> World, have they children yet bow'd at his knee?
> Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him, O pleasure?
> —Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me!

This theme is treated more profoundly in "Tristram and Iseult," for which "A Modern Sappho" may have been a preliminary sketch. Here Tristram symbolizes the participative ego. He is involved with two Iseults, neither of whom can fully receive his love—Iseult of Ireland can't because of her separation from him as wife of King Marc, and Iseult of Brittany can't because Tristram is blinded to her by his love for Iseult of Ireland. The first two parts of the poem tell of Tristram's sickness from his love for the unattainable Iseult of Ireland; he dies blinded by the "flooding moonlight" of her beauty. In this portion of the poem Iseult of Brittany is mentioned repeatedly in Tristram's love ravings, but only as the Iseult he does *not* want, despite her admitted purity and goodness. Part Three is devoted to Iseult of Brittany, who, having loved the living Tristram in vain, now survives him. Before, her presence in the poem was covert, but now it is clear that she has been the implicit centre for the poet's sympathy. She is revealed as precisely that inward projection of withdrawal personified by Sappho. Thus the story Iseult tells the children at the end of the poem is the wish fulfillment of Sappho's plea that "life" and the "world" "Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me!" Iseult envisions herself as Vivian contriving to cast a spell on the old, but still passionate, magician Merlin, and trapping him fast within her "daisied circle."

The longings of Sappho and Iseult of Brittany represent an inward pull toward stoical control without which the "lover," drawing away into "life" and the "world," would dash himself to pieces—as, indeed, Tri-

stram does. But this pull toward control may result not simply in the inhibition but also in the destruction of the participating self, may effect a virtual suicide. The question is how much force the withdrawing self must exercise in order to restrain the idealist who would be ruthless destroyer of the total ego. Undercurrent, therefore, to the controlled equilibrium envisioned by Sappho and Iseult-Vivian, is the threat of the loved hero's imprisonment or even murder by the *femme fatale*.

The suicide in its most basic form is evident in "The Sick King in Bokhara." Identifying a part of himself with a man who seeks the punishment of death for such sins as are common to all humanity, the King rules: "if he seek to fly, give way, /Hinder him not, but let him go"; then the King "softly" casts the first stone, as the sinner, looking up at him with joy, stays to embrace his execution. The King makes the extraordinary command that the corpse be brought to him; but his Vizier, at a loss to understand such sympathy for strangers, reminds him of the dignity of kingship, and of the law commanding that such a man be stoned "even were he thine own mother's son." In thus counselling the King, the Vizier perceives that the executed sinner is in a sense the King himself, that the King is similarly human. The King's sickness is his inability to escape from exactly that awareness; if he could harken to the Vizier and thus stoically ignore his disease of humanity, he could have health, release from tension. The King struggles to hold a balance between the sinner who succumbed to his thirsts and the Vizier who, being old, need not contend with any desire. If all three represent divisions of the human spirit, the final stanzas epitomize the proper action of the will in holding a firm balance between the cold indifference of reason and the consuming life of passion. The King concludes (pp. 94–5), "What I would, I cannot do," but "what I can do, that I will":

> I have a fretted brick-work tomb
> Upon a hill on the right hand,
> Hard by a close of apricots,
> Upon the road of Samarcand;
>
> Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
> This man my pity could not save,
> And, plucking up the marble flags,
> There lay his body in my grave.
>
> Bring water, nard, and linen rolls!
> Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb!
> Then say: 'He was not wholly vile,
> Because a king shall bury him.'

A similar "suicide"—the killing, or at least abandonment, of the social self by the withdrawing self—is effected by the wine of "The World and the Quietist," by "The Strayed Reveller," and by the self-imposed estrangement, the bohemianism, of "The Forsaken Merman" and "The Neckan." "The Scholar Gypsy" seems to achieve an equilibrium by abandoning his participating self; and yet, insofar as he retreats from society, the question arises does he, did he ever, exist at all? Arnold's most profound treatment of this theme is "Empedocles on Etna." It is a mistake to read this poem simply as a direct comment on Arnold's age. "Empedocles" is no Victorian "Wasteland"—no bitter lament over the death of idealism, the impossibility of holding absolute values in this withering modern age—rather it is Arnold's interpretation of the tragedy implicit in human existence in every age. Society will always banish, or at least estrange, its just ruler, and, more important, the just ruler will always find it necessary to withdraw from society; insofar as he is honest and courageous he will destroy his activist self, obliterating the pretension and arrogance of idealism. As Arnold said to Clough, Empedocles says, "Know thyself," but in that very assertion inveighs against the Emersonian idealism which defines the inner self as part and parcel of all things (p. 419):

> No eye could be too sound
> To observe a world so vast,
> No patience too profound
> To sort what's here amass'd;
> How man may here best live no care too great to explore.
>
> But we—as some rude guest
> Would change, where'er he roam,
> The manners there profess'd
> To those he brings from home—
> We mark not the world's course, but would have *it* take *ours*.

As all human knowledge is pretentious, so is human "pleasure" (p. 424):

> Pleasure, to our hot grasp,
> Gives flowers after flowers;
> With passionate warmth we clasp
> Hand after hand in ours;
> Now do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent.
>
> At once our eyes grow clear!
> We see, in blank dismay,
> Year posting after year,
> Sense after sense decay;
> Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent.

Thus Arnold spurns all idealism—hedonism as well as religion. He seems to end Act One of "Empedocles" with a direct attack upon Tennysonian idealism, asking (p. 425), must we

> . . . feign a bliss
> Of doubtful future date,
> And, while we dream on this,
> Lose all our present state,
> And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

In Act Two of "Empedocles" Arnold deals with the paradox that life in its most essential form may be death, that indeed there may be no equilibrium possible between participation and utter dissolution. As in "A Modern Sappho," he suggests that release from tension comes only with the annihilation of the participant self, and results in nothing less than the eternal loss of personality. On the volcano's summit Empedocles is poised between the longing for participation and the longing for death. Down the mountainside is his life of participation in the world of men, who will "help him unbend his too tense thought" "till the absence from himself/. . . grow unbearable" and he must again come up here to solitude. But (pp. 435–6),

> . . . he will find its air too keen for him,
> And so change back; and many thousand times
> Be miserably bandied to and fro
> Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,
> Thou young, implacable God! and only death
> Can cut his oscillations short, and so
> Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

Looking back on such an existence, Empedocles can no longer see any reason to struggle for balance; indeed, to do so may also be an arrogant assertion of idealism. How can he, a prisoner of consciousness, who sees only through its "forms, and modes, and stifling veils," know he is not deluding himself in assuming the possibility of balance. And yet, we might ask, how can he know he is any *less* deluded in believing he can eternalize his "dwindling faculty of joy," can achieve some ultimate equilibrium by precipitate reunion with the elements? Actually we are left in complete doubt, as is Empedocles; for even as he plunges he feels that his belief in finding a life of eternal repose among the elements was but "for a moment." What seems a puzzling blank—a failure in the conception of "Empedocles"—is, rather, its necessary conclusion. We are left with an absolute question: whether Empedocles' joining with the

elements is a transcendentalist assertion (and thus itself a valid idealism), as Empedocles hopes it is, or is instead an act of nihilistic futility. The answer cannot be determined, man cannot know that much about himself *vis à vis* outer reality.

The same theme is essential to "Sohrab and Rustum," where Arnold portrays the impact between the two impulses in its most violent form. The world-weary Rustum, now aware that it is his own son—his activist self—whom he has slain, repeats the pity of the "Sick King" for the dead sinner (p. 85):

> . . . rather would that I, even I myself,
> Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
> Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
> Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
> And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
> And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
> And say: *O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
> *For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!*

Rustum has complained about never achieving repose:

> But now in blood and battles was my youth,
> And full of blood and battles is my age,
> And I shall never end this life of blood.

However, Rustum has killed his activist self and repose is apparently near. The poem ends (p. 86):

> So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
> And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
> Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
> As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
> By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
> His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
> Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
> So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
>
> And night came down over the solemn waste,
> And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
> And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
> Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
> As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
> Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
> Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
> The Persians took it on the open sands
> Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
> And Rustum and his son were left alone.
>
> But the majestic river floated on. . . .

After the violent impact of activity with necessity, comes equilibrium. The withdrawing self has made the murderous sacrifice, and now, at the shoreline of existence, has its eternal moment of union with the still warm body. Or so—gazing into the expanding scene, into the mythological depths of the past—do we strive to imagine. For in the fast-dimming picture it seems impossible to measure what a small, insignificant portion of all "reality," if *any* portion, is comprised by the dual human figure. And the tragedy here portrayed may be not so much the universal self's suicidal struggle and resulting ennoblement as it is our own struggle to feel sure that such a story, with some sort of meaningful conclusion, could occur. The repose—or is it anxiety?—communicated at the end of this poem is the result of our own contemplation of the mysteries of existence—one of the greatest of which is whether we may presume so to contemplate.

For Arnold, the end of poetry is communication not of the idealist power that fuses Saul and Hallam with the resurrected Christ, but of the necessary futility of activism braving an alien reality. Although he emphasizes a search for self-knowledge, a withdrawal from social unreality, this is not the continuing process which for Tennyson, Browning, and their romantic predecessors becomes itself the ultimate truth. In the end Arnold permits nothing but the question: what is man, even to believe he can make such a search?

notes

1 *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. Howard Foster Lowry (London, 1932), 130.

2 *Ibid.*, 146.

3 *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London, 1950), 7. Subsequent page references are to this edition.

A. T. ELDER

Irony and Humour in the Rambler

Though Boswell speaks of the *Rambler* as being "enlivened with a considerable portion of amusement," he stresses Johnson's appearance in it as "a majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom" and gives his opinion that the title is not well suited to "a series of grave and moral discourses." Sir Leslie Stephen, writing in the nineteenth century, having referred to the "vivid flashes of wit and humour" in Johnson's conversation, passes on to remark of the *Rambler* that "the wit and humour have, indeed, left few traces upon its ponderous pages. . . ."[1] In our own century, Sir Walter Raleigh, who is normally fully aware of Johnson's sense of humour, in discussing the *Rambler*, places all his emphasis on its graver aspects: "The pages of *The Rambler*, if we can read them, are aglow with the earnestness of dear-bought conviction, and rich in conclusions gathered not from books but from life and suffering."[2] A still more recent critic remarks of the periodical: "There are flashes of humour here and there; but were it not for *The Idler* . . . the reader might conclude that Johnson was devoid of humour."[3] This long-standing tendency to stress the gravity of the *Rambler*, which is reflected in the comments of many critics over the years, suggests the need for a thorough examination of the lighter aspects of the periodical. Professor Wimsatt, in his discussion of Johnson's use of philosophic words,[4] has illuminated a particular facet of the *Rambler*'s humour; a broader survey of the subject may help further to reduce the *Rambler*'s exaggerated reputation for sobriety.

Johnson has, one must admit, an undoubted ability to frighten off casual readers. Take, for example, the opening of *Rambler* no. 117:

> Nothing has more retarded the advancement of learning than the disposition of vulgar minds to ridicule and vilify what they cannot comprehend. All industry must be excited by hope; and as the student often proposes no other reward to himself than praise, he is easily discouraged by contempt and insult. He who brings with him into a clamorous multitude the timidity of recluse speculation, and has never hardened his front in publick life, or accustomed his passions to the vicissitudes and accidents, the triumphs and defeats of mixed conversation, will blush at the stare of petulant incredulity, and suffer himself

to be driven by a burst of laughter, from the fortresses of demonstration. The mechanist will be afraid to assert before hardy contradiction, the possibility of tearing down bulwarks with a silk-worm's thread; and the astronomer of relating the rapidity of light, the distance of the fixed stars, and the height of the lunar mountains.[5]

The reader who perseveres through this opening[6] is surprised to find in the second paragraph that Mr. Rambler's correspondent is about to propose the theory of a garret. The humour of this paper has been amply demonstrated by Professor Wimsatt in his discussion of Johnson's philosophic humour,[7] but he has not drawn attention to the conclusion of the imaginary correspondent's letter, which pays an elaborate compliment to Mr. Rambler:

Addison observes, that we may find the heat of *Virgil*'s climate, in some lines of his *Georgick*: so, when I read a composition, I immediately determine the height of the author's habitation. As an elaborate performance is commonly said to smell of the lamp, my commendation of a noble thought, a sprightly sally, or a bold figure, is to pronounce it fresh from the garret; an expression which would break from me upon the perusal of most of your papers, did I not believe, that you sometimes quit the garret and ascend into the cock-loft.

Outbursts of this kind of self-mockery, occasionally, as here, disguised as self-applause, occur with some frequency throughout the *Rambler*. Another good example is no. 193, which begins, like no. 117, with apparent seriousness as it deals with the difficulty of appeasing man's thirst for praise. Having considered the advantage of wealthy men in being able to hire a panegyrist, Johnson passes on to the happiest of all those who can flatter themselves, "who, instead of suborning a flatterer, are content to supply his place, and, as some animals impregnate themselves, swell with the praises which they hear from their own tongues." Thinking of these leads him to think of his own favoured position among them:

This art of happiness has long been practised by periodical writers, with little apparent violation of decency. When we think our excellencies overlooked by the world . . . we sit down with great composure and write a letter to ourselves. The correspondent whose character we assume, always addresses us with the deference due to a superior intelligence; proposes his doubts with a proper sense of his own inability; offers an objection with trembling diffidence; and at last has no other pretensions to our notice than his profundity of respect, and sincerity of admiration, his submission to our dictates, and zeal for our success. To such a reader, it is impossible to refuse regard, nor can it easily be imagined with how much alacrity we snatch up the pen which indignation or despair had condemned to inactivity, when we find such candour and judgment yet remaining in the world.

Johnson's self-mockery in the *Rambler* is not confined to gibes at the expense of his role as periodical essayist, for he also mocks his creation

Mr. Rambler. Unlike Mr. Spectator, Mr. Rambler has very little to say about himself; nevertheless, he soon became known as a moralist of great gravity. That Johnson was early aware of his periodical's effect is indicated by the opening of *Rambler* no. 42, a letter from a fashionable young lady, writing from the country, whose introductory remarks contain Johnson's idea of how such a reader would regard his paper:

> I am no great admirer of grave writings, and therefore very frequently lay your papers aside before I have read them through; yet I cannot but confess that, by slow degrees, you have raised my opinion of your understanding, and that . . . you have . . . more of my esteem than those whom I sometimes make happy with opportunities to fill my tea-pot, or pick up my fan. I shall therefore choose you for the confident of my distresses . . . , though I never expect from you any of that softness and pliancy, which constitutes the perfection of a companion for the ladies: as, in the place where I now am, I have recourse to the mastiff for protection, though I have no intention of making him a lapdog.

Another young lady, in no. 191, has been less impressed by Mr. Rambler's worth. Having been given some *Ramblers* to read by her aunt, who is obviously aware of Mr. Rambler's liking for hard words, she complains:

> I have been forced . . . to sit this morning a whole quarter of an hour with your paper before my face; but just as my aunt came in, *Phyllida* had brought me a letter from Mr. *Trip*, which I put within the leaves and read . . . , while my aunt imagined, that I was puzzling myself with your philosophy, and often cried out, when she saw me look confused, "If there is any word that you do not understand, child, I will explain it."[8]

The best example of this kind of humour is the opening of no. 109, a letter supposed to have been written by a disillusioned fop. To the promise with which his letter opens, to introduce Mr. Rambler to a new species of wretchedness, the writer adds this comment:

> I cannot but imagine the start of attention awakened by this welcome hint; and at this instant see the Rambler snuffing his candle, rubbing his spectacles, stirring his fire, locking out interruption, and settling himself in his easy chair, that he may enjoy a new calamity without disturbance. For, whether it be that continued sickness or misfortune has acquainted you only with the bitterness of being; or that you imagine none but yourself able to discover what I suppose has been seen and felt by all the inhabitants of the world; whether you intend your writings as antidotal to the levity and merriment with which your rivals endeavour to attract the favour of the publick; or fancy that you have some particular powers of dolorous declamation, and *warble out your groans* with uncommon elegance or energy; it is certain that, whatever be your subject, your gayety is quickly overcast, and, though your readers may be flattered with hopes of pleasantry, they are seldom dismissed but with heavy hearts.

Perhaps the only comparable outburst of this kind in English literature is the complaint to Terence in the penultimate poem of *A Shropshire Lad.*

As well as enjoying mockery of his own gloom, Mr. Rambler takes a dour delight in playing with his readers. The solemn opening of no. 117 is only one of his tantalizing methods. Others appear in nos. 107 and 15. In no. 107, in answer to the complaint that his papers lack "that intermixture of subjects" by which other writers "relieved weariness," Johnson produces a combination of two letters "of very different tendency," which, he hopes, "like tragi-comedy may chance to please even when they are not critically approved." In the first letter a fifteen-year-old miss discusses a proposed change in the calendar requiring the dropping of eleven days in the next September. Only an overheard discussion of the scheme, called *the alteration of style*, led to some illumination of her understanding of the project:

> At last, two friends of my papa, Mr. *Cycle*, and Mr. *Starlight* . . . began to talk about the new style. Sweet Mr. *Starlight*—I am sure I shall love his name as long as I live; for he told *Cycle* roundly, with a fierce look, that we should never be right without a *year of confusion*. Dear Mr. Rambler, did you ever hear of any thing so charming? a whole year of confusion! When there has been a rout at mamma's, I have thought one night of confusion worth a thousand nights of rest; and if I can but see a year of confusion, a whole year, of cards in one room, and dancings in another, here a feast, and there a masquerade, and plays, and coaches, and hurries, and messages, and milliners, and raps at the door, and visits, and frolicks, and new fashions, I shall not care what they do with the rest of the time, nor whether they count it by the old style or the new; for I am resolved to break loose from the nursery in the tumult, and play my part among the rest; and it will be strange if I cannot get a husband and a chariot in the year of confusion.

This letter, which should dispel completely the notion that Johnson is invariably ponderous, is coupled with a second letter, not by Johnson, on the plight of unmarried mothers forced to become prostitutes. Mr. Rambler callously leaves to his readers the problem of reconciling this unnatural yoking of subjects.

No. 15, a paper on gambling, takes a more subtle tack. It opens with some general remarks which lead the reader to expect letters illustrating the dire effects of the vice, an expectation thwarted by Mr. Rambler's correspondents. The first, a young lady lately arrived in London from the country, complains that the city's society is so absorbed in cards that it pays no attention to her. The second begins as if she were genuinely perturbed by the behaviour of a gambling husband: "Nay, if even Grizzel had been married to a gamester, her temper would never have held out. A wretch that loses his good-humour and humanity along with his money, and will not allow enough from his own extravagancies to support a woman of fashion in the necessary amusements of life! . . ."[9] The concluding words of the quotation indicate the turn taken by this letter. The

writer is complaining not of her husband's losses but of his annoyance over her losses at Brag. By his approach, Johnson not only jolts his reader's expectations but also raises much broader social issues than the mere bad effects of gambling.

A more direct satiric approach appears in some of the *Rambler*'s papers. Most readers are acquainted with the satiric character sketches, in nos. 59 and 200 respectively, of Suspirius the screech-owl and Prospero, "a man lately raised to wealth by a lucky project." In these, and others such as that describing Gulosulus in no. 206, the humour is the product of the satirist's normal device of exaggeration. Thus, when the visitor commends Prospero's tea, he is told by his host that there is a finer brand within the house "but that he had only a very small quantity remaining, and reserved it for those whom he thought himself obliged to treat with particular respect." Direct satire is also used in the letters, in nos. 132, 194, and 195, of the tutor of a young nobleman. The youth's mother is the primary target because of her consuming wish to have her son properly prepared for society. When he is taken to London he adjusts so readily to his new setting that "in less than a month his mother declared her satisfaction at his proficiency by a triumphant observation, that she believed *nothing would make him blush*." Even in this series, however, Johnson's love of irony is displayed. The tutor, who has done his best, in opposition to the mother's wishes, to limit his pupil's excesses, becomes a victim of ingratitude as he is replaced by "a *French* governour" who is to conduct the young nobleman on his travels. With these papers we may associate *Rambler* no. 61, a letter by Ruricola, who admits to having an insatiable appetite for news, and who, living in the country, is always behind the times, so that he is "perplexed with a perpetual deception" in his prospects, "like a man pointing his telescope at a remote star, which before the light reaches his eye has forsaken the place from which it was emitted." He is concerned about one Frolick, a local boy, who until his departure for London seven years before to study law had been remarkable "for stealing eggs and sucking them." Frolick has returned from the city to dazzle his fellow townsmen with tales of his London achievements: "Whatever has distinguished the hero; whatever has elevated the wit; whatever has endeared the lover, are all concentred in Mr. Frolick, whose life has, for seven years, been a regular interchange of intrigues, dangers, and waggeries, and who has distinguished himself in every character that can be feared, envied, or admired." Though the account of Frolick's supposed achievements is enough to condemn him as an ingenious inventor of

tales, Ruricola has so often suffered the humility of being scorned by visitors from London for his lack of knowledge of events there that he wishes to know whether Mr. Rambler has yet heard "the great name of Mr. Frolick." Again, though the main attack is upon Frolick, the correspondent is exposed to ironic treatment.

Mr. Rambler, as well as his correspondents, sometimes experiences an attack by means of irony, a particular example being no. 105. In no. 89 Johnson had written: "There is nothing more fatal to a man whose business is to think, than to have learned the art of regaling his mind with . . . airy gratifications." In no. 105 Mr. Rambler allows himself to fall into this error as he considers a new scheme to establish a universal registry, "an office, in which every man may lodge an account of his superfluities and wants, of whatever he desires to purchase or to sell." As he considers this project, Mr. Rambler is swept away by his enthusiasm much as is Gulliver when in the land of the Struldbrugs he considers the value of earthly immortality. The Rambler extends the nature of the office until it becomes in his imagination "a place where every exuberance may be discharged, and every deficiency supplied; . . . where the stock of a nation, pecuniary and intellectual, may be brought together, and where all conditions of humanity may hope to find relief, pleasure, and accommodation. . . ." With these thoughts he falls asleep to dream of a universal registry presided over by Justice and Truth. To it come, principally, those desiring recognition for their discoveries or attainments. Their requests permit Johnson to direct searching satiric comment at the impossibility of satisfying man's desires. One applicant to the court, for example, is the inventor of a new method of education by which all may become learned "without any fear of punishment, pain of confinement, loss of any part of the gay mien of ignorance, or any obstruction of the necessary progress in dress, dancing, or cards." He is curtly dismissed by Justice and Truth "as a tall fellow" who "might serve in any post where the knowledge of reading and writing was not required." Nor does Mr. Rambler escape condemnation. Truth suddenly asks him his business at her office, and he, whom the scene has sufficiently impressed with the weaknesses of others, is immediately aware of his own error in indulging in such impossible dreams.

Yet we must not leave the impression that Johnson's humour and irony in the *Rambler* may be detected only by the analytic reader. Professor Wimsatt has drawn our attention to Johnson's humorous use of philosophic words, but even the essays dealing with virtuosi of various kinds

contain humour in no way dependent on learned jargon for its effect. No. 199, for example, the letter of Hermeticus, the maker of magnets for "preserving the connubial compact from violation," contains a harrowing, but none the less entertaining, description of the virtuoso's early trials:

> I was born to no fortune, and therefore had only my mind and body to devote to knowledge, and the gratitude of posterity will attest, that neither mind nor body has been spared. I have sat whole weeks without sleep by the side of an athanor, to watch the moment of projection; I have made the first experiment in nineteen diving engines of new construction; I have fallen eleven times speechless under the shock of electricity; I have twice dislocated my limbs, and once fractured my skull, in essaying to fly, and four times endangered my life by submitting to the transfusion of blood.

All this, the virtuoso explains, took place in the "first period" of his studies when he "exerted the powers of . . . body more than those of . . . mind, and was not without hopes that fame might be purchased by a few broken bones without the toil of thinking. . . ." Another virtuoso, the collector in no. 82, also writes with feeling of his early ventures in his field: "I never entered an old house, from which I did not take away the painted glass, and often lamented that I was not one of that happy generation who demolished the convents and monasteries, and broke windows by law."

Though Johnson makes frequent use of the ironic device of having correspondents unconsciously condemn their own pursuits, he, as one might expect of the author of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and *Rasselas*, is primarily interested in the *Rambler* in the irony of disappointed hopes. Though all his essays on this theme have a serious purpose, the treatment is often lightly ironic. In *Rambler* no. 10, for example, in which the editor answers billets written by Miss Mulso, one of the imaginary correspondents, while volunteering to write for the periodical, fears he may be discouraged by having his first essay rejected. Mr. Rambler advises him not to be disheartened even though this should happen, for, since the presses of England are always open, he may, by printing privately, test the judgment of the public. As one would expect in the imperfect world of Mr. Rambler, the advice works out badly; in what way, precisely, we learn in no. 16. The would-be author, having had a pamphlet printed, is now experiencing the pains that come with publication:

> I am now, Mr. Rambler, known to be an author, and am condemned, irreversibly condemned, to all the miseries of high reputation. The first morning after publication my friends assembled about me; I presented each, as is usual, with a copy of my book. They looked into the first pages, but were hindered, by their admiration, from reading further. The first pages are, indeed, very elaborate. Some passages they particularly dwelt

upon, as more eminently beautiful than the rest; and some delicate strokes, and secret elegancies, I pointed out to them, which had escaped their observation. I then begged of them to forbear their compliments, and invited them, I could do no less, to dine with me at a tavern. After dinner, the book was resumed; but their praises very often so much overpowered my modesty, that I was forced to put about the glass, and had often no means of repressing the clamours of their admiration, but by thundering to the drawer for another bottle.

Even more amusing than the expense to which the newly launched author is subject is the disappearance of his modesty. Though he tries not to permit himself "more premeditated airs of superiority, than the most rigid humility might allow," he finds himself shunned by all his acquaintances. "I live in the town like a lion in his desert, or an eagle on his rock, too great for friendship or society, and condemned to solitude by unhappy elevation and dreaded ascendency." He is afraid to utter a careless word lest he lead astray half the nation. He ends his letter by asking Mr. Rambler how he may return "to the enjoyment of that quiet, from which I find a writer of the first class so fatally debarred."

The *Rambler* yields many such letters from disappointed correspondents. Among them is that already referred to, in no. 109, from a disillusioned fop, whose predicament may be laid to his faulty upbringing by parents unhappily lacking in solid qualities: "They had both kept good company, rattled in chariots, glittered in playhouses, and danced at court, and were both expert in the games that were in their time called in as auxiliaries against the intrusion of thought." The mother at length took over full control of the household, though the father "still retained some authority in the stables, and, now and then, after a supernumerary bottle, broke a looking-glass or china dish to prove his sovereignty. . . ." Both parents were much concerned lest their child should become bookish. Indeed, the mother once considered dismissing her son's tutor, because, the correspondent writes, "I began . . . to learn his manner of sticking on my hat, and had his bend in my shoulders, and his totter in my gait." Brought up by his mother knowing only how to please the ladies, he finds in middle age that they are no longer attracted and protests fatuously that "females ought to pay some regard to the age of him whose youth was passed in endeavours to please them."

In *Rambler* no. 109 the reader's enjoyment arises from Johnson's self-mockery at the opening of the aging fop's letter and from the delicately ironic description of the parents' shortcomings. In *Rambler* nos. 101 and 141, the irony results from the situations in which two wits find themselves. Since their careers are quite similar, we may limit our attention to Papilius

in no. 141. Papilius was admired at both school and the university for his good humour. His tutor at the university for a time checked his negligence, but "he could not long hold out against the power of hilarity, . . . began to relax the muscles of disciplinarian moroseness . . . , and that he might not betray his trust to his fondness, was content to spare my diligence by increasing his own." On leaving the university, Papilius went to London, where he "was quickly distinguished as a wit by the ladies, a species of beings only heard of at the university. . . ." Having securely established his reputation, he now writes to complain of the difficulty of maintaining his position:

> Consider, Mr. *Rambler*, and compassionate the condition of a man, who has taught every company to expect from him a continual feast of laughter, an unintermitted stream of jocularity. The task of every other slave has an end. The rower in time reaches the port; the lexicographer at last finds the conclusion of his alphabet;[10] only the hapless wit has his labour always to begin.

The unfortunate Papilius, like the modern radio or television comedian, has been reduced to doing research in order to keep up his reputation, and at the age of forty-five is "under the melancholy necessity of supporting that character by study, which [he] gained by levity."[11]

The expectations of human beings in marriage receive ironic treatment in a series of essays on the disappointments met by men and women seeking suitable mates. Included are two letters by Hymenaeus, nos. 113 and 115, on the faults of women; a reply by Tranquilla, no. 119, on the weaknesses of men; and a discussion by various correspondents, in no. 126, of the faults of both. Hymenaeus reports his experiences with a variety of women, of whom the most appalling is Misothea, in no. 113, who made the error of attempting to demonstrate to her suitor "the folly of attributing choice and self-direction to any human being." Hymenaeus wasted no time in ending this courtship:

> It was not difficult to discover the danger of committing myself for ever to the arms of one who might at any time mistake the dictates of passion, or the calls of appetite, for the decree of fate; or consider cuckoldom as necessary to the general system, as a link in the everlasting chain of successive causes. I therefore told her, that destiny had ordained us to part, and that nothing should have torn me from her but the talons of necessity.

Equally entertaining are the remarks of Hymenaeus, in no. 115, about those "hymeneal solicitors" who

> fill the ears of every single man and woman with some convenient match, and, when they are informed of your age and fortune, offer a partner for life with the same readiness, and the same indifference, as a salesman, when he has taken measure by his eye, fits his

customer with a coat. . . . They contended for me as vultures for a carcass; each employing all his eloquence, and all his artifices, to enforce and promote his own scheme, from the success of which he was to receive no other advantage than the pleasure of defeating others equally eager, and equally industrious.

Tranquilla's encounters with males are similar to Hymenaeus' with females, and her description of the cowardice of Venustulus, whom she had to rescue from various threats, including "a dog that yelped at his heels, to which he would gladly have given up me to facilitate his own escape," arouses some amusing ironic comment by another correspondent in no. 126. He writes of the unwillingness of men generally to hear censure of cowardice because fear is so frequently felt by everyone:

There is one species of terrour which those who are unwilling to suffer the reproach of cowardice have wisely dignified with the name of *antipathy*. A man who talks with intrepidity of the monsters of the wilderness while they are out of sight, will readily confess his *antipathy* to a mole, a weasel, or a frog. He has indeed no dread of harm from an insect or a worm, but his *antipathy* turns him pale whenever they approach him.

This correspondent's most extreme example of "the speculatists of cowardice" is a man who lived in dread of housebreakers. Having spent nine years discovering the best method of barring a door, "he had at last, by the daily superaddition of new expedients, contrived a door which could never be forced: for one bar was secured by another with such intricacy of subordination, that he was himself not always able to disengage them in the proper method." Some one destroyed his bliss by asking him how he would escape from a fire. "He then immediately tore off his bolts, and now leaves at night his outer door half-locked, that he may not by his own folly perish in the flames."

It must be admitted finally that Hymenaeus and Tranquilla differ from the other disappointed correspondents, for no. 167 is a joint letter from them announcing their marriage, which they enter with no unreasonable expectation of finding connubial bliss.

The disappointment of Misocapelus, the younger son of a wealthy country family, related in nos. 116 and 123, stems, as frequently happens with Mr. Rambler's correspondents, from his faulty upbringing, especially by his mother, the daughter of a London merchant, who continually spoke of the glories of the city, of her father's greatness, and of "the heaps of gold which he used on *Saturday* night to toss about with a shovel." Thus encouraged, Misocapelus apprenticed with a haberdasher who "had all the good qualities which naturally arise from a close and unwearied

attention to the main chance." Disappointment came to the model apprentice on his return home in the fourth year of his term, expecting to be received as "a master of pecuniary knowledge" and "an oracle of the mode." He found instead that he could not compete for attention with a gay colonel and an eloquent lawyer. He now longed only to escape from his occupation. His inheritance of the estate from his brother seemed to offer release, but he experienced as much difficulty in shaking off the encumbrances of trade as Mr. Spectator in giving up his habitual silence. He observed with wonder how frequently ladies and gentlemen as he passed by were talking of a tailor, and once when he had helped a lady in a crowded passage she thanked him for his civility and promised to be among his first customers when he set up in business for himself. All attempts to establish himself as a fashionable gentleman having ended in failure, he affirms in his conclusion that he hopes in future "to secure esteem by honesty and truth."

The *Rambler*'s gallery of disappointed fortune-hunters is much too extensive to discuss in detail, but all waste their time and energy in vain pursuits. Thus Leviculus, in no. 182, passes through a series of courtships that always end in failure. Constantius, in no. 192, and Captator, in nos. 197 and 198, seek to win the affections of wealthy relatives and prove unequal to the demanding task. Though all these accounts are tartly diverting, the paper of this series which best displays Johnson's mastery in the handling of irony is no. 73 describing the experience of Cupidus. He is the son of a formerly wealthy family whose only hope of regaining its position in society is to have the possessions of the father's three unmarried sisters revert to the hereditary estate upon their deaths. Cupidus passed his life waiting for them to die so that he might enjoy their fortunes. They proved so hardy that his father "could not always restrain himself from exclaiming, *that no creature had so many lives as a cat and an old maid.*" To the disgust of Cupidus, as the sisters died, each left her fortune to the next in line, and the last proved very hardy. Those about her, who looked to Cupidus as her heir, often flattered his hopes:

> It was [their] constant practice . . . to pay their court by informing me that my aunt began to droop, that she had lately a bad night, that she coughed feebly, and that she could never climb *May* hill; or, at least, that the autumn would carry her off. Thus was I flattered in the winter with the piercing winds of *March*, and in summer, with the fogs of *September*. But she lived through spring and fall, and set heat and cold at defiance, till, after near half a century, I buried her on the fourteenth of last *June*, aged ninety-three years, five months, and six days.

By this time, of course, Cupidus was himself so old and had spent so many years in anticipation that he got no satisfaction from his long-awaited fortune. Considered in essence, the experience of Cupidus is bitterly ironic, but Johnson's treatment of his material so insulates the reader that he does not receive the full emotional shock which the events differently handled could produce. For one thing, the behaviour of the family of Cupidus verges on the ridiculous:

> If any of our neighbours surpassed us in appearance, we went home and contrived an equipage, with which the death of my aunts was to supply us. If any purse-proud upstart was deficient in respect, vengeance was referred to the time in which our estate was to be repaired. We registered every act of civility and rudeness, inquired the number of dishes at every feast, and minuted the furniture of every house, that we might, when the hour of affluence should come, be able to eclipse all their splendour, and surpass all their magnificence.

And though Cupidus is fully aware of the tragedy of his wasted life, even as he describes the anguish of waiting for the decease of the last remaining aunt he is conscious of a ludicrous element in his experience:

> But let no man from this time suffer his felicity to depend on the death of his aunt. The good gentlewoman was very regular in her hours, and simple in her diet; and in walking or sitting still, waking or sleeping, had always in view the preservation of her health. She was subject to no disorder but hypochondriac dejection, by which, without intention, she increased my miseries, for whenever the weather was cloudy, she would take to her bed and send me notice that her time was come. I went with all the haste of eagerness, and sometimes received passionate injunctions to be kind to her maid, and directions how the last offices should be performed; but if before my arrival the sun happened to break out, or the wind to change, I met her at the door, or found her in the garden, bustling and vigilant, with all the tokens of long life.

The enumeration of the exact number of days, months, and years that the aunt lived adds a final touch of grim humour.

Unquestionably, the prose style of Johnson is one that lends itself to subtle ironic effects. The opening of *Rambler* no. 124, for example, one of a series on society's annual summer migration to the country,[12] illustrates the way in which the balanced structure and sonorous diction, assisted by the melancholy notes in the concluding clauses, can transform what could be a bald statement of fact into an ironic expression of sympathy:

> The season of the year is now come, in which the theatres are shut, and the card-tables forsaken; the regions of luxury are for a while unpeopled, and pleasure leads out her votaries to groves and gardens, to still scenes and erratick gratifications. Those who have passed many months in a continual tumult of diversion; who have never opened their eyes in the morning, but upon some new appointment; nor slept at night without a

dream of dances, musick, and good hands, or of soft sighs and humble supplications; must now retire to distant provinces, where the syrens of flattery are scarcely to be heard, where beauty sparkles without praise or envy, and wit is repeated only by the echo.

The elegiac tone of the opening gives way in the second paragraph to an expression of the writer's concern for the ladies, who, until they are released by winter's renewed activities, "must endure the rugged squire, the sober housewife, the loud huntsman, or the formal parson. . . ." The pitying tone is continued, but not sustained, as Johnson considers that the plight of the exiles resembles the fate believed by the Platonists to be the future punishment of those who have in their lifetime been satisfied to indulge only the fleshly appetites:

I cannot but suspect that this month, bright with sunshine, and fragrant with perfumes; this month, which covers the meadow with verdure, and decks the gardens with all the mixtures of colorifick radiance; this month, from which the man of fancy expects new infusions of imagery, and the naturalist new scenes of observation; this month will chain down multitudes to the *Platonick* penance of desire without enjoyment, and hurry them from the highest satisfactions, which they have yet learned to conceive, into a state of hopeless wishes and pining recollection, where the eye of vanity will look round for admiration to no purpose, and the hand of avarice shuffle cards in a bower with ineffectual dexterity.

The essay ends with the blunt advice to these exiles that they should consider their "eternal interests" and seek to improve their qualifications for "celestial happiness."

Though Johnson's "principal design to inculcate wisdom or piety"[13] is never long neglected, the *Rambler* contains a much larger proportion of lighter material than is generally recognized. Johnson, it is true, makes no concessions to his readers; indeed, he seems at times almost to be challenging his readers' powers of endurance, a species of perverseness best illustrated by the forbidding openings of the humorous papers on the theory and on the history of a garret. There is, then, much truth in his statement in the last issue: "I have seldom descended to the arts by which favour is obtained." This staunch refusal to cater to the public taste is, however, the source of a hidden pleasure in the *Rambler*. One never knows when an apparently serious discussion, such as that in no. 193, will dissolve into irony. The transformation does not often occur, but its very infrequency adds to the delight of the reader when he encounters it.

Much of the humorous or ironic effect of Johnson's *Rambler* issues from his style. We are not referring to his use of philosophic words, which is one source of his humour, or to special effects which his style can achieve,

but to a more basic quality. The effect may best be described as the amusing impact of apt phrasing frequently pregnant with irony. Notice, for example, the collector's wish to have been one of the "happy generation" who "broke windows by law," or the correspondent's writing of the amusements of his parents as "auxiliaries against the intrusion of thought," or the description of the haberdasher as having "all the good qualities which naturally arise from a close and unwearied attention to the main chance." This is very different from the use of a pseudo-philosophical style and consists basically of nothing less than "proper words in proper places."

Johnson's humour and irony in the *Rambler* are not, however, the product of style alone. They arise as well from his attitude toward himself and his readers. Johnson is fully aware, for example, of Mr. Rambler's gloomy cast of thought, and, while recognizing that he must continue to be moralistic, is able to laugh at his own gloom and at his readers for supposing him to be always gloomy. At the same time he ridicules the periodical writer's constant resort to the device of the imaginary correspondent and delights in playing with his readers, in subjecting them to uncertainty, and in forcing them to read laborious introductions even to humorous essays. Though Johnson himself writes of his periodical in its last number that "scarcely any man is so steadily serious as not to complain, that the severity of dictatorial instruction has been too seldom relieved, and that he is driven by the sternness of the *Rambler*'s philosophy to more cheerful and airy companions," one is tempted, upon considering the amount of irony in the *Rambler*, to argue that in this statement Johnson is merely giving ironic assent to the judgment of contemporary readers who were not attracted by his papers.

No one would argue that the *Rambler* is light reading or that its purpose is not primarily serious. Johnson's sense of the vanity of human life is too deeply rooted to permit him to waste much of his own or his reader's time in mere amusement. Yet his accompanying sense of the irony of human existence enables him to regard with wry humour not only the weaknesses of Mr. Rambler but also the futile efforts of his fellows to attain their desires. Irony, then, predominates over humour in the pages of the *Rambler*. But it is not bitter irony, and Mr. Rambler, unlike the coolly self-sufficient Mr. Spectator, is as subject to vanity and as open to ridicule as the rest of us.

Finally, the modern reader who is at all willing to tackle Johnson's writings should not be discouraged by the *Rambler*'s reputation for gloom. That much of the periodical makes heavy going is true, but the sobriety of the general tone adds piquancy to the humour and irony when they appear. The reader with a taste for irony, in particular, will find much to reward him.

notes

1 *Samuel Johnson*, "English Men of Letters" series (London, 1925), 40.

2 *Six Essays on Johnson* (Oxford, 1927), 14.

3 Jane H. Jack, "The Periodical Essayists," *Pelican Guide to English Literature*: IV, *From Dryden to Johnson* (Harmondsworth, 1957), 227.

4 W. K. Wimsatt, *Philosophic Words* (New Haven, 1948), 115–21.

5 All quotations from the *Rambler* are taken from *The Works of Samuel Johnson LL.D.* (London, 1824), IV, V, VI.

6 The same method is followed in no. 161 on the history of a garret. Not until the end of the third paragraph does the writer disclose his subject.

7 Wimsatt, *Philosophic Words*, 119–21.

8 This young lady is a victim of irony. In her letter she complains that her guardians, her mother and two aunts, have been misleading her about the perfidy of men, of whom she writes: "I have not, since my entrance into the world, found one who does not profess himself ready to live or die as I shall command him. They are so far from intending to hurt me, that their only contention is who shall be allowed most closely to attend, and most frequently to treat me."

9 This letter, like the second in no. 107, is not by Johnson.

10 Here, too, we find another example of Johnson's self-mockery, which was to be repeated in the definition of "lexicographer" in the *Dictionary*.

11 A genuine wit is subjected to ironic attack in no. 157 as Verecundulus returns home from the university "covered with academical laurels and fraught with criticism and philosophy" to find that his attainments do not guarantee social success.

12 The irony of disappointed hopes appears as well in the *Rambler*'s discussions of this subject, in the letters of Euphelia in nos. 42 and 46, complaining that where she expected to find "the seats of innocence and tranquillity" she has found malice and hatred which have lasted for generations, and in the letter of Cornelia, in no. 51, who went expecting to find leisure and encountered instead the indefatigable Lady Bustle, who filled her days with "conserving, reserving, and preserving." Other ironic aspects of society's summer migration are considered in *Rambler* no. 135 in which Johnson wonders why these migrants waste their summers in pursuits they could follow equally well in the city and "with no change of objects but what a remove to any new street in *London* might have given them."

13 *Rambler* no. 208.

ALEX ZWERDLING

W. B. Yeats: Variations on the Visionary Quest

It is, therefore, supreme ignorance for any one to think that he can ever attain to the high estate of union with God before he casts away from him the desire of natural things.
St. John of the Cross

St. John's words are not intended to sum up Yeats's ideas on the subject of the visionary quest but rather to epitomize the position which he so strenuously opposed, particularly in his later work. They help us to understand Yeats's important quarrel with the traditionally accepted idea of visionary experience. As St. John suggests, the religious mind ordinarily strives to move *toward* perfection, toward a final union with God or a transcendent realm of spirit, and in an antinomic system of religious belief like Christianity, this implies the logical corollary of a movement *away from* "the desire of natural things," from the mortal world itself, multitudinous, impermanent, decaying, and ultimately undesirable. It is precisely this "necessary" corollary which Yeats could never fully accept. The central problem of visionary experience for him, the reconciliation of the two worlds, perfect and imperfect, grew out of his refusal to accept the necessity of pursuing one at the expense of the other. Yeats's dissatisfaction with either world taken separately, his unwillingness to accept one or the other as the province of ultimate value, inspired his attempt to reconcile the two apparently opposed realms.

This restless search for an escape from the implications of an antinomic religious belief has been misunderstood by many of Yeats's readers. It is a critical commonplace, for example, that in the later poetry the powerful attraction of the mortal, physical, perishable world is seen as greater than that of the flawless spiritual one. In reality this movement—which we might call the rejection of the perfect—presents itself in Yeats's work from the very first, as we shall see, and yet never actually becomes powerful enough to "find," in Auden's words, "the mortal world enough."

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We must trace this movement with some care in order to evaluate its importance. In Yeats's early work, the inadequacy of an independent spiritual realm is suggested most clearly by the treatment of Irish myth. The ideal world of Tir-na-n-Og, the paradise of Irish mythology and the home of the Shee or immortal fairies, was traditionally one of permanence, gaiety, and perfect bliss, a land of eternal youth and happiness. It is therefore interesting that Yeats consistently chooses incidents and characters which reveal the inadequacy of this perfect world. His most characteristic means of suggesting this is to make the "imperfect" mortal world seem highly desirable to his immortal characters. Yeats was, for example, fond of quoting a remark which George Russell ("AE") once heard "an old religious beggar" repeating: " 'God possesses the heavens, but He covets the earth—He covets the earth.' "[1]

Yeats's immortals also "covet the earth," for there is something about the mortal world, for all its limitations and imperfections, which to the flawless spiritual one seems unattainable and therefore desirable. Again and again in the early work, we find Yeats making use of this idea, as for instance in the characteristic story of the immortal fairy who snatches a mortal away to her own world. The most familiar examples which come to mind are *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *The Wanderings of Oisin*, but there are others. In a little known short story published in 1891, *Dhoya*, the pattern of the Oisin legend is reworked. Dhoya is a mortal of great strength and passion who leads a life of self-sufficient isolation for many years until an immortal fairy falls in love with him and agrees to share his mortal existence. She explains:

> "Dhoya, I have left my world far off. My people—on the floor of the lake they are dancing and singing, and on the islands of the lake; always happy, always young, always without change. I have left them for thee, Dhoya, for they cannot love. Only the changing, and moody, and angry, and weary can love. . . . I left the places where they dance, Dhoya, for thee!"

Some of the stories in the 1897 collection, *The Secret Rose*, are based on a similar idea, that the people of the Shee, the "gentry" of the Irish immortal world, envy men their passions. In "The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hanrahan the Red," for instance, the fairy Cleena says to Hanrahan, "I love you, for you are fierce and passionate, and good and bad, and not dim and wave-like as are the people of the Shee." And the poem "The Host of the Air" is a variation on the story of *The Land of Heart's Desire*; here, it is O'Driscoll's bride, Bridget, who is stolen by the fairies. Yeats makes clear in a note to the first edition of the collection *The*

Wind among the Reeds that all of these tales merely appropriate a constant theme of Gaelic literature itself: "The old Gaelic literature is full of the appeals of the Tribes of the goddess Danu to mortals whom they would bring into their country."

Later poems and plays continue to stress the same theme. "The Grey Rock," from *Responsibilities* (1914), describes the grief of Aoife when the mortal hero she loves spurns her offer of immortality and chooses to die fighting a human battle with his king. She asks in despair,

> Why should the faithfullest heart most love
> The bitter sweetness of false faces?
> Why must the lasting love what passes,
> Why are the gods by men betrayed?

We can see the answer to her question in Yeats's poems, for it is man's mortality, and the way in which he squanders the precious gift of life, that gives him a kind of greatness the gods cannot possess. The point is made clearly in a poem from the same collection, "The Two Kings." Here Edain, asked to return to the immortal world by her immortal husband, spurns his offer and refuses to leave her mortal husband, the warrior Eochaid. When the former asks, uncomprehendingly, "What happiness/Can lovers have that know their happiness/Must end at the dumb stone?" Edain replies,

> "How should I love . . .
> Were it not that when the dawn has lit my bed
> And shown my husband sleeping there, I have sighed,
> 'Your strength and nobleness will pass away'?
> What can they know of love that do not know
> She builds her nest upon a narrow ledge
> Above a windy precipice? . . .
> Never will I believe there is any change
> Can blot out of my memory this life
> Sweetened by death, but if I could believe,
> That were a double hunger in my lips
> For what is doubly brief."

The idea that human life is "sweetened by death" is at the heart of the paradox which is given its definitive statement in the play *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919). There Cuchulain, the mortal warrior-hero, rejects the woman of the Shee for "mere" humanity, and the Chorus explains,

> He that has loved the best
> May turn from a statue
> His too human breast.

And in the play *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1934), we find the baldest answer to the question of what the immortals lack, why they descend into human life: "For desecration and the lover's night." In the words of one of Yeats's favorite poets, William Blake, "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

It should be clear, then, that a "rejection of the perfect," with its concomitant praise of the human world of passion, is not the product of Yeats's later years but begins at the beginning of his career. It is equally misleading, however, to suggest that the movement away from perfection was more powerful in Yeats's work than the movement toward it. Certainly the "mere" mortal world was hardly the ideal state either, and few writers could have been more conscious of its imperfection than Yeats. We will see presently that the celebration of the physical world in the later poetry is never at the *expense* of the spiritual one. The problem, then, is not which to choose but how to avoid the necessity of making a choice between mortal and immortal.

Yeats found two "solutions" to this vexing problem: the first a sceptical vacillation and refusal to accept the necessity of commitment, the other an actual attempt to resolve the dichotomy. Yeats must have realized that scepticism presented a poetic problem, that in hesitating to renounce either of two contradictory worlds, his poetry was in danger of itself becoming confused, uncertain, and so robbed of its essential energy. He solved this technical problem in a technical way, by inventing a series of *personae* and using them in a kind of poetic debate. These *personae* are very distinct, dramatically conceived characters who have a clear and unambivalent point of view about the desirability of a certain way of life. The best examples are the three people involved in the story of "The Three Bushes," the lover, the lady, and the chambermaid. Each has an intense and passionate conviction despite the fact that all three are the product of a highly sceptical and "unconvinced" consciousness.

Crazy Jane is such a *persona*. She argues for the virtues of the physical life against the Christian form of spiritual experience in poems like "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop" and "Crazy Jane and the Bishop." Yeats uses the technique of exaggeration and caricature in these poems. The physical world is summed up in the idea of illicit sex, the spiritual in organized religion, so that the principles remain inevitably at odds. Nevertheless, they are both represented within the unified framework of one series of poems, and thus the metaphysical choice is avoided while at the same time the poetry retains its air of passionate conviction.

Yeats's *personae* are most frequently involved in a kind of debate, a natural medium for the sceptic. The method is simply to have more than one speaker, more than one point of view, represented in a single poem. "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," for example, unlike "Crazy Jane and the Bishop," records a literal debate, for the Bishop is here a *persona* too, with a point of view which the poem permits him to express. Much of the later poetry exploits this technique by recording a dialogue between two or more characters about the relative value of physical and spiritual life: "Michael Robartes and the Dancer," "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," "For Anne Gregory," "Ego Dominus Tuus," and others. But if we expand the definition of "debate" a little so that it means simply the juxtaposition of opposing ideas, we can see how persistent the method actually is, for many of Yeats's poems fall into this category even though no actual verbal debate occurs: for example, "Oil and Blood," the two Byzantium poems, or "Ribh Denounces Patrick." The advantages of such a method are obvious, for a desirable ambiguity can be retained without sacrificing either clarity or the energy generated by passionate conviction.

Nevertheless, the *persona* and the debate were after all only methods; they did not resolve the vacillation in Yeats's own mind, but merely exploited it. The later poetry goes further than this by denying the necessity of an exclusive choice, by demonstrating how the soul can "attain to the high estate of union with God" *without* "casting away the desire of natural things." When one sees beyond the logically acceptable position of the inevitable conflict between one principle and its opposite, man's spiritual quest and the "desire of natural things" are seen to be simultaneous and inseparable.

The idea is succinctly stated in the last stanza of "Among School Children," in the parallel images of the chestnut tree and the dance. Here is a world where "body is not bruised to pleasure soul":

> O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The antithesis between mortal and immortal is here stated in Platonic terms, but the answer to these rhetorical questions is clear enough: because the ideal world of forms intersects the actual world of particulars at innumerable points, the two are almost indistinguishable. We cannot "tell the dancer from the dance" because they are inseparable. Most of

the characters in the poem are incapable of understanding this fact: the nuns and mothers, who worship only the images of perfection; the philosopher who, like the misguided Plato, thinks "nature but a spume that plays/Upon a ghostly paradigm of things." But the true visionary, here and in the later poetry of Yeats, does not leave the actual world behind in the moment of vision. He sees *both* the tree and its form, both the dancer and the dance, in one instant of time.

The most important metaphor which Yeats uses to describe the intersection of the two worlds is that of sex, a fact which might suggest that he is praising the world of flesh at the expense of the world of spirit. That is not, however, the case. Yeats pictures sexual experience as a moment of ecstasy which takes man, in a kind of transport, out of himself. It is important to remember that before the word "ecstasy" became part of the language of the marriage manuals, it was used to describe religious experience. Yeats exploits the word in its modern ambiguity. The poem "Solomon and the Witch," for example, records such an ecstasy:

> Last night, where under the wild moon
> On grassy mattress I had laid me,
> Within my arms great Solomon,
> I suddenly cried out in a strange tongue,
> Not his, not mine.

And in the poem "Ribh Denounces Patrick," the metaphor is reversed and the suggestion made that eternal creation is like sexual reproduction on earth:

> Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed.
> As man, as beast, as an ephemeral fly begets, Godhead begets Godhead.

In Yeats's final view of the visionary, then, physical and spiritual are seen as inseparable, mutually dependent, and simultaneous. The change is recorded in the two Byzantium poems. The earlier "Sailing to Byzantium" is a "debate" which emphasizes the dichotomy between physical and spiritual very sharply. "That country" and "the holy city" are set against each other, the one a world of youth, sex, and decay, the other a world of art, religion, and the changeless. The speaker in the poem does not reconcile these two but abandons one for the other: "Once out of nature I shall never take/My bodily form from any natural thing." Although the later "Byzantium" superficially exploits the same contrast, the last stanza in particular shows that there is an essential difference. The

perfect world of Byzantium and the changing world of "the fury and the mire of human veins" are not only connected literally by the constant trips of the dolphins but seen as mutually dependent on each other. Although it is true that the poem records the process whereby mortal becomes immortal, it is also true that this process is described in metaphors of eating and burning, and that the mortal world provides the necessary food and fuel to keep the immortal world alive. And it is significant that the final image of the poem is not of the eternal world, but of the world of nature which is feeding it:

> Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
> Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
> The golden smithies of the Emperor!
> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity,
> Those images that yet
> Fresh images beget,
> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

To put the matter succinctly, the idea of an actual world intersected at innumerable points by a spiritual one appealed to Yeats because it raised the actual world to an ultimate level, thus making its rejection unnecessary, while at the same time it created an opportunity for ecstatic visionary experience which did not leave man's world behind. In such a view, the actual physical world became sacred territory. Yeats felt that these ideas echoed Plotinus, the philosopher whom he read with such enthusiasm in 1926. Plotinus, he says,

> was the first to establish as sole source the timeless individuality, or daimon, instead of the Platonic Idea, to prefer Socrates to his thought. This timeless individuality contains archetypes of all possible existence whether of man or of brute. . . . Plotinus thought that we should not 'baulk at this limitlessness of the intellectual; it is an infinitude having nothing to do with number or part' (Ennead V. 7. I.) *yet it seems that it can at will re-enter number and part and thereby make itself apparent to our minds.* If we accept this idea, many strange or beautiful things become credible. . . . All about us there seems to start up a precise, inexplicable, teeming life, and *the earth becomes once more, not in rhetorical metaphor, but in reality, sacred.*[2]

This notion of the earth itself as sacred, along with the possibility that spiritual reality can "make itself apparent to our minds," appealed greatly to Yeats. It is no wonder, then, that Plotinus becomes the hero of some of the later poems and is usually contrasted with Plato, as in the two related poems "The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus" and "News for the

Delphic Oracle." In both, Plotinus is pictured as striving to reach the safe harbor of Platonic Love, a world of perfection, but still "buffeted by such seas" and with "salt blood" blocking his eyes. As in the Byzantium poems, the sea represents the physical world of passion and blood. It is therefore significant that Plotinus reaches the shore only after a passionate struggle with the sea, while Plato and the stately "choir of Love" look on blandly from the safety of the shore.

It should be pointed out, however, that Yeats evolved this ideal of the intersection of the spiritual and actual worlds only in the work of his last fifteen or twenty years, and that the early poetry is based for the most part on the traditional dichotomy between spiritual and physical—without, as has been pointed out, always preferring the former. Unlike the visionary hero of the later Yeats, the seer of the early poetry is forced to abandon the mortal world if he wants to reach the spiritual one. The predominant symbol of spiritual reality in these poems and plays is the island, separated from the mainland and providing a kind of absolute isolation from it. We might say that there is a gradual shift in Yeats's poetry from the *goal* of the spiritual quest to the quest itself, and that metaphorically this can be seen in the later poetry in the greater use of the images of the sea and of water—symbolizing the quest—which replace the numberless islands of the early work.

An interesting example of the early ideal of the isolated island of spiritual contemplation is Yeats's plan (mentioned first in the nineties) for a "Castle of the Heroes," to be located on an unoccupied island in Lough Key.[3] There the finest men and women could retire, very much like monks to a monastery, for spiritual contemplation, and there they might "establish mysteries like those of Eleusis and Samothrace."[4] The plan suggests the necessity of divorcing oneself completely from the actual world in order to find the spiritual one, and thus emphasizes the distinction between Yeats's early and late views. The same idea is suggested in *The Shadowy Waters*, when Forgael says that it is only "where the world ends" that the "mind is made unchanging," and finds "Miracle, ecstasy, the impossible hope." In *Where There Is Nothing* (1902), the hero insists that "We must destroy the World; we must destroy everything that has Law and Number, for where there is nothing, there is God." He has learned, he says, "that one needs a religion so wholly supernatural, that is so opposed to the order of nature that the world can never capture it." The Yeats of the twenties and thirties would never have accepted such a

statement. As early as 1888 he was already writing to Katharine Tynan, "I have noticed some things about my poetry I did not know before, in this process of correction; for instance, that it is almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world, and a summons to that flight."[5] But many years were to pass before Yeats could combine in his imagination the "flight into fairyland" with the real world from which the flight began.

The change in Yeats's thought can best be understood in terms of the traditional faculties of man: reason, imagination, and the passions. Ordinarily, we consider the former two the less "earth-bound," reason being often identified as "man's divine spark." In Yeats's early poetry, accordingly, much more stress is laid on the so-called higher faculties of reason and imagination. Through them (and particularly, as in the romantic poets, through the imagination at work in dreams and visions) man may reach the world of spirit. The reversal comes first in some of the poems in the 1920 collection, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. At this point it is the "passions" which become the higher faculty, and the link between them and visionary experience is clearly made in several poems: "Solomon and the Witch," "An Image from a Past Life," "Towards Break of Day." In the later poetry, this connection is retained, the only significant change being that human "passions" become interpreted in a more and more blatantly sexual way. At the same time, there is a complementary rejection of and exaggerated contempt for reason alone, as in the poem "A Prayer for Old Age":

> God guard me from those thoughts men think
> In the mind alone;
> He that sings a lasting song
> Thinks in a marrow-bone.

In the *Pages from a Diary Written in Nineteen Hundred and Thirty*, Yeats sees himself "set in a drama where I struggle to exalt and overcome concrete realities perceived not with mind only but as with the roots of my hair. The passionless reasoners are pariah dogs and devour the dead symbols."

We may legitimately ask why this reversal took place, why it is now man's physical and passionate life which opens the doors to the spiritual world. There is, of course, a possible biographical explanation, for the praise of physical life seems always to be connected with another theme in Yeats's later poetry, the lament for old age. In poem after poem this juxtaposition is made: "Among School Children," "The Tower," "A Prayer for Old Age," "The Wild Old Wicked Man," "Politics," and

many others, including the Crazy Jane poems. "The Tower" answers the question of what connection there is between old age and the praise of physical life, for here we see that age brings with it a narrowing of the possibilities of life. "Decrepit age" has made the life of passion impossible, and one must reconcile oneself and "be content with argument and deal/ In abstract things." In a sense, then, the poems of old age continue a basic pattern established early in Yeats's work, that of longing for the unattainable and scorning the easily attainable. The only difference is that the terms have been reversed. In youth it was abstraction, wisdom, philosophy which one longed for, because they seemed so difficult to reach. In old age, on the other hand, the physical vigour which has been so prodigally wasted in youth seems much more desirable than the "wisdom" which has come.

Yet the neatness of such an explanation obscures a more important reason for the great emphasis on the value of the actual world in the late poetry. In a letter to John O'Leary written in 1892, Yeats suggests that he has made "magic"—meaning by this the cultivation of the means of discovering the spiritual world—"next to my poetry the most important pursuit of my life."[6] It is highly significant that he thus places artistic creation first, for Yeats never really changed his mind about this hierarchy. If anything, his art seemed always to become more and more demanding. And art, he came to realize, must inevitably begin with the actual physical world and cannot ever completely bypass it. During the period when Ezra Pound acted as Yeats's secretary (1913–16), Yeats asked him to go through his poetry and point out all the abstract words he could find. The number was so startling that Yeats embarked upon a systematic attempt to de-emphasize abstraction in his work. Pound convinced him that a vague "spiritual" language was the curse of the poetry of the nineties, and that all poetry must be more strongly rooted in the actual and the physical than Yeats's had been heretofore.

Here, then, is a partial explanation of the constant insistence in the later poetry that art begins with physical reality and the actual world rather than with abstraction. To those who feel that lust and rage are not fit subjects for an old man's poetry, Yeats answers in "The Spur," "What else have I to spur me into song?" And in "Vacillation," the Heart gets the better of a dialogue with the Soul:

> THE SOUL. Seek out reality, leave things that seem.
> THE HEART. What, be a singer born and lack a theme?

Despite the attractions (such as they are) of a life of pure spirit, the artist's example must be "Homer . . . and his unchristened heart," the Homer whose theme was not salvation but "original sin." Finally, in "The Circus Animals' Desertion," the most uncompromising poem on this subject, Yeats speculates on the origin of all the spiritual images of the artist. Though they "grow in pure mind," their origin is not only in the actual world, but in the most grossly physical part of it. The "ladders" of artistic creation all lead up from "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart":

> Those masterful images because complete
> Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
> A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
> Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
> Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

These, then, are two possible explanations, biographical and aesthetic, for the increased emphasis on the actual world, on man's physical and passionate nature, in the later poetry of Yeats. For all that emphasis, however, it cannot be repeated too often that Yeats's celebration of the physical world in the poetry of the last years is never at the expense of the visionary goal, is never proof that the mortal world taken independently is enough. Though it is the place "where all the ladders start," it is not where they end. Only the *means* to vision had undergone an important transformation. As a result of the shift from the "higher" faculties to the "lower," true vision now seemed possible in ecstatic transcendence through, rather than apart from, the physical world. This idea of the intersection of physical and spiritual experience seemed to open a new world of visionary possibility and to resolve the self-destructive antagonism of flesh and spirit in poems like "Sailing to Byzantium."

The apparent dichotomy of mortal and immortal, then, is seen finally as potential harmony, for man "thinks in a marrow-bone" and "perceives" with "the roots of his hair." Yet at the same time, we realize with Yeats that even this is in a sense a false resolution. For though man may be able to combine physical life with spiritual truth, though it is true that visionary experience is within man's scope, the ultimate fruition is still denied to the Yeatsian seer: his "vision" does not last. We get a sense of this when Sheba, in describing her visionary experience to Solomon,

suddenly realizes that it has been nothing but a momentary release from a humdrum existence: " 'Yet the world stays.' " And here is the basic problem with all of Yeats's visionaries, that, in spite of a momentary fruition, "the world stays," and the ordinary conditions of life are re-established. The very metaphor of sexual union obviously emphasizes the transience of the experience, but even in poems which do not describe "ecstasy" in strictly sexual terms, the visionary state is at best a few moments snatched from the immense flow of time, as the poem "Vacillation" suggests:

> While on the shop and street I gazed
> My body of a sudden blazed;
> *And twenty minutes more or less*
> It seemed, so great my happiness,
> That I was blessèd and could bless.

Although time and eternity may occasionally intersect, Yeats's visionary is always ultimately frustrated by the reassertion of the laws of time. Even in the early "Song of Wandering Aengus" (1897), the vision of the "glimmering girl" almost instantly fades "through the brightening air," and Aengus spends the rest of his life in a fruitless search to recapture the lost vision. The frustration of the devoted visionary in the play *At the Hawk's Well* is even more complete, for here Cuchulain's search for spiritual reality is frustrated by the guardian hawks who cast a spell over him whenever the water—which represents the immortal here—rushes into the well. Yeats's visionary then, like all his other heroic men, is not a success but a failure, and it is only through the transcendence of that failure and the despair which it might bring that he becomes truly heroic.

The philosophic implications of this frustrated search for ultimate truth were described in Yeats's *A Vision*. In that book, he formulated a theory of history based upon a notion of human existence as a series of endlessly repetitive cycles. "Immortality," for man at least, was simply the necessity of rebirth after rebirth in age after age. Yeats's system is, of course, a variation of the familiar idea which Mircea Eliade has called the "myth of the eternal return," but it is essential to stress that it is not conceived as moving toward a clear terminal point and thus creating the sense of direction and meaning. Rather, existence seems to repeat itself eternally, life following upon life, civilization upon civilization, the second coming following the first, and no doubt, the third following that, and so on. What hope does such a system offer man in his search for

apocalypse, for a spiritual world no longer subject to the frustrating exclusive reassertion of time?

The escape from the "wheel" of existence is, I think, stressed unduly by some interpreters of Yeats, particularly by Ellmann in his *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*.[7] It is true, as Ellmann says, that Yeats postulates an eventual release in something which he calls the "thirteenth cycle." Yet this scarcely makes his system a very optimistic one, since the knowledge of this ultimate reality is denied to man and "has kept the secret."[8] Unfortunately, "the day is far off when the two halves of man can define each its own unity . . . and so escape out of the Wheel."[9] As Yeats says in his essay on *Prometheus Unbound*, "Divinity moves outside our antinomies, it may be our lot to worship in terror."

It is clear, then, that Yeats offers no easy faith to his visionaries. But it is also clear that his last poems emphasize the supreme necessity of conquering the despair which such a gloomy view of the universe might generate. Yeats devoted much thought to the final problem of how the visionary, caught in a cyclical pattern of existence which can only minimize the meaning of his achievement, is to react to the knowledge that his own momentary vision has little meaning and no permanence in the endless repetition of human events. Despair itself is destructive and makes any kind of heroic achievement impossible. Under no circumstances, then, must the visionary hero give way to it. To an inevitably tragic situation, he perpetually sings a song of innocence rather than of weary wisdom and disillusionment.

The false "resolution" of the antithesis between mortal and immortal thus leads ultimately to an exaltation of man himself, for its pessimistic message is a test of heroic resiliency. If ultimate reality—or God—is unattainable except in rare and irregular moments of ecstatic communion, the "joyous" visionary himself becomes of supreme importance, for his heroic acceptance of the situation is at least self-generated and self-sustained. In a sense, then, Yeats's variations on the visionary quest lead him closer and closer to a position which we might call consecrated humanism, the elevation of humanity to near-Godlike status. Man's ultimate and inevitable defeat makes his refusal to surrender and his occasional triumph all the more meaningful and offers the consolation that

> Whatever flames upon the night
> Man's own resinous heart has fed.

notes

1 *The Trembling of the Veil* (London, 1922), 130.
2 *The Words upon the Window Pane* (Dublin, 1934), 32–3. Italics mine.
3 See Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (New York, 1948), 121–3.
4 *Poems, 1899–1905* (London, 1906). These lines were not in the first version of *The Shadowy Waters*.
5 *W. B. Yeats: Letters to Katharine Tynan*, ed. Roger McHugh (Dublin and London, 1953), 47.
6 *Some Letters from W. B. Yeats to John O'Leary and His Sister*, ed. Allan Wade (New York, 1953), 14.
7 See pp. 281–4.
8 *A Vision* (London, 1937), 302.
9 *A Vision* (London, 1925), 215.

PETER REMNANT

*Is Everything I See Really Inside My Head?**

One might think the answer to this question too patently obvious to require the expensive attentions of a professional philosopher. After all, while I write I can see my wife—and it is hardly likely that she is inside my head. And what is more, I see her head and she sees mine—but if the principle suggested in my initial question were both true and general then her head would have to be inside my head and my head would have to be inside her head. And this is not just unlikely—it is logically impossible.

Another point: although I continually see things that are not inside my head, such as tables and chairs and my wife and the dog, when I want to see something that is inside my head, such as my teeth or tonsils or my eardrum, I can only do so with the help of more or less elaborate equipment like mirrors and special lighting.

And yet we find as distinguished a philosopher as Bertrand Russell maintaining that although "we *can* witness or observe what goes on in our heads . . . we cannot witness or observe anything else at all" (*The Listener*, Feb. 6, 1958, p. 226). If he is right about this, either I really cannot witness or observe my wife at all or else she must be inside my head—a disturbing thought on either alternative.

I shall begin by attempting to show what considerations have led Russell, and others, to defend such an extraordinary opinion, and then say why I remain unconverted to their view.

A considerable amount is now known about the physiology of perception—and Russell has always been sensitive to the philosophic implications of scientific facts. In order for a person to see something, light must travel from the surface of the object to his eye and, entering his eye, be focussed on its retina. Here the light brings about a chemical change in

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those cells of the retina upon which it falls. These cells are all attached to nerve fibres which lead to a particular area of the brain, and the chemical change in the cells triggers off a succession of nerve impulses which travel up the optic nerve and in turn stimulate neural activity in the visual region of the brain.

Nerve tissue all behaves in the same way: stimulation of the nerve ending brings about a chemical change at the tip of the nerve fibre and this chemical change travels up the fibre very much like a spark travelling along a fuse. The principal difference is that nerve fibre is alive and can begin to repair itself as soon as the spark has gone by, so that as long as the stimulation continues the nerve fibre will go on transmitting impulses as fast as it can repair itself.

Now since all nerve fibres carry the same kind of impulses, the only thing that distinguishes visual from auditory impulses, for example, is that they travel to different regions of the brain. It seems reasonable to suppose that if a person's optic nerve could be detached from his eye and hooked up to his ear, and his auditory nerve detached from his ear and hooked up to his eye, he would then, so to speak, hear sights and see sounds. This is well confirmed by the fact that if a person's optic nerve or the visual area of his brain is artificially stimulated by weak electric shocks administered through suitably placed electrodes, he can be made to experience simple visual hallucinations. Presumably a brain kept alive in a bottle and fed information in the form of electric impulses from microphones and television cameras could enjoy as rich and rewarding a life as any average member of the middle class.

Facts of this kind strongly suggest that the eyes, the optic nerve, and the brain function together like a kind of radar set, responding to events in their vicinity and transmitting these responses to a central point inside the head where they somehow become available as more or less accurate pictures of what is happening outside.

The analogy is reinforced by what happens when the sensory equipment goes out of order or is interfered with. Just as a radar set, if it is not operating properly, is apt to produce images on its screen which are not pictures of anything at all, so we frequently experience after-images and dreams and, occasionally, hallucinations, which are the result of interference with the proper working of our sensory apparatus.

But if our visual equipment does work like radar, then the pictures it produces must be somewhere in the brain, and whatever it is in me which

becomes conscious of these pictures must witness them as they appear, one after the other, inside my head. In terms of the radar analogy what I really see is not the car on the highway but its picture in my head, and the "me" that sees the pictures does not correspond to the radar set but to the policeman who watches its screen.

Here, however, the analogy ends—if the policeman wants to have a look at the car whose picture he has been watching he need only stand up and look out the window. But there is nothing like this that *I* can do to compare *my* picture with the real thing, I can only keep on watching the pictures and hope for the best. And if I do sometimes detect a breakdown in transmission, it is only by noticing that the pictures are not coming in as they ought to or that I am receiving pictures that do not belong, it is never by getting a direct look at the thing outside.

II

Some such account of perception as this has exercised a fascination upon a great many scientists and philosophers and it does seem the obvious way to deal with the known facts about the physiology of perception. Yet it is not without its difficulties.

To begin with, what about the pictures in our heads? The brain contains a great tangle of nerve fibres but nothing much like a radar screen; and although it is the scene of innumerable patterns of neural activity it contains no pictures. When I look at a chair there is, it is true, a tiny inverted image of a chair on the retina of each of my eyes but there is nothing like a picture of a chair in my brain; what there is in my brain, with respect to the chair, is a succession of neural impulses flowing into the visual area and on into the neighbouring association areas.

No pictures—and no policeman either; there is nothing to be found in the brain which could perform the role of spectator of the picture; all there is are more nerve cells conducting their impulses to yet more nerve cells and sending impulses down the efferent nerves to the muscles of the body. It is difficult to say what we could hope to find that would fill the role of a spectator, perhaps a tiny naked man inside the pineal gland watching the pictures as they flash onto the screen. But presumably *he* would have to have tiny eyes of his own and a tiny brain, and in it there would have to be an even tinier man keeping his eyes on the screen, and so *ad infinitum*.

Instead of hoping to find little men inside our heads some philosophers have spoken of non-physical pictures and ghostly spectators. Neural impulses entering the brain produce these non-physical pictures in somewhat the way that electrical impulses in the radio produce music, and, although we do not know how ghosts do it, at least they do not need eyes and brains in order to see. According to this account the real me, the me that even my wife does not understand, is the ghost that animates my physical body (the only remarkable thing about this is that a ghost should need such elaborate physical facilities).

But ghosts and non-physical pictures are strange components of a would-be scientific account of perception. And what is more they really fail to perform the explanatory function for which they were introduced. Let me explain with the help of an analogy: when we discover that certain sorts of disease are caused by very small organisms in the blood stream, we may consider that a similar sort of disease, in which no such organisms are to be found, is caused by similar but even smaller organisms, so small, in fact, that even with our strongest microscopes we cannot see them. The hypothesis that sub-microscopic organisms are present is one which explains the disease symptoms in a manner consistent with our existing knowledge about diseases of this type and it may very well lead to successful methods of treating the disease in question. But when we abandon the hypothesis that there is a little man inside the head, not just because we are unable to find one, but because even if we did find him we would be faced with exactly the same kind of problem in trying to explain *his* perceptual processes, then it is no help whatsoever to say, "Well then, there must be an *invisible* man in there whose perceptual processes, whatever they may be like, at least do not create the same kind of puzzles that we invented him to solve." This would be just like the old howler about dormative faculties.

Recognizing the uselessness of appeals to ghostly tenants, tougher-minded philosophers have dispensed with a spectator altogether (in a particularly subtle form which defies summary, this seems to be Russell's own position). If appeal to ghosts is neither scientifically respectable nor genuinely explanatory, then must we not be content to say simply that light activates my optic nerve; that the optic nerve activates the visual area of my brain; that this then activates the association areas, which in their turn activate the motor areas; and that these then activate the efferent nerves, which activate the muscles, which cause me to pick up, push aside,

walk toward, turn away from, the thing that the light came from in the first place? We could build an electronic machine which would do much the same sort of thing.

But here an essential piece of the story seems to have been left out—seeing something does not just consist in being stimulated by light from it and by reacting to it in some appropriate way. Our machine would be able to do all this but it would not be able to *see* the things that it was dealing with. Electronic computers do not see the tapes by which they are programmed, and they do not feel pain when one of their tubes burns out, not even if they are designed to say "ouch" whenever this happens. Seeing involves more than just the ability to respond to things in our vicinity, it involves having what, for lack of a better term, must be called visual experiences.

Some of these tough-minded thinkers have argued that the pictures in our heads which provide us with visual experiences are simply the patterns of neural activity themselves, that there is nothing else that could constitute a picture, and that there is no spectator. Now instead of a haunted house we seem to have a deserted movie palace on top of our shoulders, in which, nevertheless, the film grinds incessantly on. But pictures cannot see themselves, not even when they consist of neural impulses. And for that matter, since all nerve tissue and all neural activity is of the same nature, why should patterns of activity in one part of the brain see themselves and patterns in another part hear themselves?

III

How did we ever come to be saddled with this pictures-in-the-head theory of vision? If you remember, the story went something like this: light from an object strikes my retina thereby sending impulses up my optic nerve to the visual area of my brain and enabling me to see. These facts cannot be questioned, but from here on phantasy began to creep in. The idea of signals being wired into the brain and the analogy with television and radar tempted us to talk about pictures inside the head and an internal spectator to look at them, or, alternatively, just pictures with no one to look at them. But not only is there no spectator to be found in there and nothing very much like pictures, the whole idea of a spectator or of self-seeing pictures turns out to be logically absurd.

If the pictures-in-the-head theory leads to so many difficulties, then,

instead of exploring still more implausible ingenuities in the hope of patching it up, why not drop it entirely and begin looking for a quite different account? And to begin with why not simply say that, in a way which we do not yet fully understand, when light from an object enters the eye and produces neural activity in the brain we then, under normal circumstances, see the object from which the light has come? This may leave unanswered many questions of detail and it may raise some nice puzzles for philosophers to unravel, but unless it can be shown to involve logical absurdities, it is better than the theory we have been discussing. Furthermore there is some reason to think that this account will not be found to involve such absurdities since, unlike the pictures-in-the-head theory, it is not really a theory at all, but rather a straightforward account of the facts insofar as they are known—that we do see things and that this depends in some way upon the stimulation of our eyes and brains by light from the things we see.

There is no need to look for pictures and spectators inside people's heads; this account speaks only of people and the things they see and the light that makes seeing possible, or, putting it another way, when I see a horse, I am the spectator and what I see is not a picture of a horse but the horse itself. And it may be added, more or less in parentheses, that the kind of argument, based upon what we know about the physiology of perception, which maintains that we cannot really see things, but only pictures of things, is itself scarcely intelligible unless we assume that physiologists are able to see the retinas and brain tissues and nerves of their subjects. After all, if physiologists were really restricted to looking at pictures inside their own heads it would be difficult to understand how they could ever find out that they had heads at all, let alone retinas and nerve fibres.

IV

But enough of sweet reasonableness! There are other considerations which have fortified the doctrines of the pictures-in-the-head school and to these we must now turn our attention.

In the process of discussing the radar analogy, I mentioned that the occurrence of after-images, dreams, and hallucinations contributed to the plausibility of the analogy. For the sake of simplicity let us keep to after-images for the time being: look at a bright light for a moment or two, then look away; you will find a bright spot of colour floating about in

front of your eyes; close your eyes and it is still there, gradually changing colour and fading away. Now here is clearly a case in which we see something which is not a physical object and which is not out there where the chair and table are and where it seems to be as long as we keep our eyes open. What's more, it is a thoroughly private object: you can see your after-image but you cannot see mine, and you would not even know where to look for it.

From this does it not follow that my after-image is in my head and your after-image in your head, specks, so to speak, on the windows of the mind? So long as we are looking out through the windows, these seem to be external objects, but with the shutters closed they remain visible inside. And isn't the difference between after-images and the other things we see not that the other things are outside our heads and after-images inside, but that although the other things are also inside, they differ from after-images in having immediate causes which are outside. When I close my eyes I continue to see my after-images, but I do not continue to see my private pictures of the outside world because the light which causes them has been shut off. In the case of dreams and hallucinations we are dealing with more complicated kinds of mental pictures than after-images, but still with pictures whose immediate causes are inside the head, or body, rather than outside.

The point of these considerations is that if we possess undeniable evidence that there are pictures in our heads, namely after-images and their more complex cousins, we cannot summarily dismiss the theory that whenever we see anything what we really see is a picture in the head. If pictures in the head do occur then, however puzzling this may be, at least there can be no logical absurdity in the concept of such pictures. And since normal seeing presumably depends upon much the same kind of brain processes as does the seeing of after-images and hallucinations, this constitutes further confirmation of the theory that we can never see anything but pictures inside our own heads.

V

One way of attacking this renewed defence of the pictures-in-the-head theory would be to show that after-images, hallucinations, and dreams are not pictures in our heads—not, at least, in the sense in which the theory implies that they are. This is what I shall attempt to demonstrate.

To begin with, there is a perfectly unobjectionable sense in which after-images and the like can be said to be inside our heads. Remember where Hamlet says "Methinks I see my father" and, when Horatio says excitedly "Oh, where, my lord?", replies "In my mind's eye, Horatio"—not out where you could see him, but in here. In general, my after-images, memories, dreams, hallucinations are in here in the sense that none of them is the sort of thing that other people can see; in the sense that they are things that I can see just as well, perhaps better, with my eyes shut as with them open; in the sense that I carry them around with me as I move about just as I do my teeth and tonsils.

But these are all reasons for adopting a manner of speaking, for saying that I see my wife out there but my father in here. They are not reasons for concluding that my after-images are inside my head in the sense in which my eardrums are. In fact, if they were reasons for concluding that my after-images are literally inside my head, then they would equally be reasons for concluding that the things I see in ordinary vision are outside.

The neural activity associated with my after-images is certainly in my head in the same sense that my tonsils are, but the after-images themselves certainly are not. Search as he will with probe and scalpel, the most skilful surgeon will never lay bare one of my after-images.

But if my after-images are not literally in my head how can I see them with my eyes closed? And if not in my head, where else can they be?

The first question is easy, I continue to see them when my eyes are closed because seeing them does not depend on the continued excitation of my retina by light from outside.

And the answer to the second question—"where are they?"—is briefer still. They are nowhere. Or, alternatively, they are just where they seem to be. Two answers is not a sign of uncertainty—there are two possible interpretations of the one question. If I say to someone "Where is your after-image now?" he can quite properly reply "Over there between the bookcase and the armchair." But if I then say "No, no—I don't mean where does it seem to be, I mean where is it really?" the best short answer is "Nowhere."

If it seems paradoxical to say that something which can be seen is really nowhere, then I can only reply that after-images are not alone in this matter. Not only are they accompanied by such odd companions as dreams and hallucinations but also by comparatively respectable things like rainbows, the shimmer of sunlight on water, and the spots of reflected

light on the lenses of my glasses. And notice that rainbows and light reflections can hardly be said to be inside my head in the sense in which after-images and hallucinations are.

With regard, for example, to rainbows and the glitter of light on wet pavement, I can always say where they are in the sense of where they seem to be but, just as with after-images, if I am asked to say where they really are, the most I can do is to point out the inappropriateness of the question. The fact that they seem to be in one place does not, in these cases, imply that they really are in another.

What all this indicates is that after-images, dreams, and hallucinations are not pictures in our heads in any sense that has significance for theories about vision. All that can justifiably be said about them is that when the visual area of the brain is stimulated in certain abnormal ways, we seem to see things that are not really there, or, which comes to the same thing, we see things which only seem to be there. If this kind of thing happened more often than it actually does, the language of vision would have to be more tentative than it is. But, as things are, we ordinarily speak of seeing what is really there—and most of the time we are right.

To conclude, I am not interested in offering a new theory of vision; I am quite content to leave that sort of thing to the psychologists and physiologists. What I am doing is attacking certain speculative embellishments of the actual facts according to which seeing consists in inspecting private pictures and jumping from them to conclusions about the nature of the external world. I have tried, somewhat sketchily, to show that this account of seeing is logically incoherent and that it rests upon misleading analogies and misinterpreted experiences. I propose no alternative embellishments, I only insist that any sound theory of vision must come to terms with the fact that we normally see physical things themselves, and not merely mental pictures of physical things.

Review Articles

COMEDY AND SOCIETY*

The distinguishing character of eighteenth-century literature is, perhaps, the breadth and depth of its comic range and perspective. In comedy, from Dryden's rather limp performances to the more sprightly, if sometimes superficial, plays of Sheridan and Goldsmith, the comic spirit hovers with the right degree of malignity over the social forms and customs of an "enlightened" age. In fiction, Sterne develops and intensifies his comic attitudes, which, though unique, are yet to be associated, through their common intellectual heritage, with the earlier and more inchoate novels of Defoe, the genteel manners comedy of Richardson, and the more obvious comic techniques of *Humphry Clinker* and *Tom Jones*. Before stooping to truth and moralizing his song, Pope subscribes to the manners *genre* in *The Rape of the Lock* and proceeds in the *Essay on Man* to an anatomy of the comic world and later, in the *Moral Essays* and the intensive closing lines of *The Dunciad*, to illustrations of a comic theory in practice. His emphasis upon the seemingly irreconcilable contrarieties of human experience, upon what we now consider the existential anomaly of life in divided and distinguished worlds, issues in a unified comic intelligence and sensibility which is the hallmark of the best in eighteenth-century literature.

Assuming that the basis of comedy is in the ineluctable irony of seeming opposites, of fact and value, appearance and reality, nature and truth, eighteenth-century writers explore their subjects with varying degrees of intensity, providing at their best mature insight into the complexities of the human situation. Occasionally, as in Swift, a *saeva indignatio* can result in "dark comedy," perhaps the most incisive form of the comic *genre*: one in which the action is so highly intensified as to result in a sombre, though balanced, evaluation of man's condition without sacrificing its essentially comic autonomy. Such an attitude accounts in part at least for the superiority of the action of *The Way of the World* when compared with its pale imitation in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, as it may explain to a degree the shift from the acrid tones of the first three books of *The Dunciad* to the more meditative temper of the fourth book. The comic vision of a Pope, a Swift, a Congreve, or a Sterne provides not only a common ground for discussion of eighteenth-century writers but also, in terms of the intensity of the vision as conveyed through the presentation of social situation, some indication of the continuity of the humanist tradition in an age which is too frequently identified with an exclusively satiric orientation.

*See page 98 for bibliography of books discussed in this article.

The five books under consideration here have as their subjects writers generally associated with varying aspects of eighteenth-century comedy. Here, however, similarity ends, since the critical approach in each of the five studies is highly specialized, ranging from Professor Moore's scholarly biographical method (in no sense of the word "critical") through Dr. Goldberg's analysis of Smollett's novels in terms of their association with the Scottish Common-Sense School, and Loftis's socio-literary tack, to the "new-critical" expertise demonstrated by Norman Holland in his account of the eleven plays of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve. The skills involved in editorial research are aptly demonstrated in Professor Richmond Bond's *New Letters to the Tatler and Spectator*.

The Bond volume prints for the first time from the original manuscripts in the Marlborough and Tickell collections ninety-six "letters to the editor" (seventy to *The Tatler* and twenty-six to *The Spectator*) which were rejected, or in some cases modified, for publication by the editors. As Professor Bond states in an "Introduction" that is admirable in its general survey of the practices of periodical publication from 1690 to 1714 and in its particular references to the editorial policies of Steele, Addison, and Tickell, the letters "contribute to the variety as well as to the dimension of the assemblage of Bickerstaff-Spectatoriana, instruct us agreeably in the ways of the citizen of Anne's age, and suggest a closer understanding of the uses of high journalism." In addition, it would appear that these messages from a literate and at times semi-literate public give further insight into the comic spirit that pervades much of the material in the popular periodical of Addison's age, and help to distinguish between the tone of *The Tatler* and that of *The Spectator*. The prevailingly light-hearted ironic tone of the new letters to *The Tatler* ("Follies of the Town," "Extempore Prayers," "Love for Mr. Bickerstaff" from the "Sincerest most Passionate Respective & Constant of Lovers," "Platonic Love by Correspondence," and "A Smoking Wife") contrasts with the more sober and reflective ironies of those to *The Spectator* ("Follow Nature," "Text from Lucan and Verses to Mr. Spectator," "Understanding and Counsel," "Religion and Charity"). Such a contrast serves to indicate the greater occupation of *The Spectator* "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality," and that of *The Tatler*, to provide for its readers sophisticated literary *divertissement* without failing to observe the *utile* in the *dulce*. That the new letters (which show "no sign of stylistic or mechanical editing") enlarge the understanding of English society, taste, and codes of *politesse* provided by the *Tatler* and *Spectator* essays seems questionable, but Professor Bond is justified in claiming for them "a special value as messages from the public . . . of Anne's England in its own high or low idiom, its own moods and modes, and its posture of thought and circumstance of deed."

As the subtitle of Professor Moore's biography of Defoe would suggest, the emphasis throughout the work is upon the modern cast of Defoe's mind and thought. In the most comprehensive of Defoe biographies yet to be undertaken, the author makes use of new legal, manuscript, and periodical materials in addition to some five hundred and forty-five titles constituting the canon of Defoe's works to establish his subject as a "citizen of the modern world." As the first social historian, the first economic geographer, "the

first sociologist to warn that responsibility for social evils cannot be placed wholly with society's lower classes," the first psychologist to anticipate "the problems of modern lie-detection procedures," as the founder of modern journalism, the author of the first ghost story, and the father of the English novel, Defoe emerges as a man of protean energy and drive, a fiercely independent journalist militantly set against tyranny and oppression, the invincible Puritan moralist, a master in "the transcendent art of thinking and standing alone."

Professor Moore traces the numerous and varied careers of his ubiquitous subject with a masterly touch. The first fifteen chapters of the biography follow a chronological outline giving only those details of Defoe's personal life as seem "significant for understanding him as a citizen of the modern world." Here his mercantile undertakings as hosier and importer of wine and tobacco, his speculations in real estate and in the manufacture of pantiles and bricks, in fisheries, ship-building, and linen-weaving, and his first involvements in governmental service are outlined in sharp relief; and Professor Moore captures in an uncanny way the spirit of Puritan industry and assiduous determination which is characteristic of Defoe's multifarious activities. The nine chapters which follow, more topical in their arrangement, are concerned with his literary undertakings as pamphleteer and confidential agent for the Harley administration, as novelist, poet, and wit, as historian and biographer, traveller, projector, and economist. The chronological method is resumed in the two final chapters, which present details of the closing years of Defoe's life, an examination of his character, and an evaluation of his influence. The possible difficulties in the combination of chronological and topical arrangements are obviated by a "chronological outline" and a complete index appended to the text; indeed, as the author points out in his foreword, such an arrangement is the most reasonable one in view of Defoe's occupation with "a confusing variety of interests at exactly the same time."

According to Professor Moore, "the novels of Defoe are incidental in his career. His more serious concern was in the field of history." While the biography does not pretend to detailed examination of the poetry and fiction, the author's perfunctory treatment of that side of Defoe's literary career is hardly justified, especially in view of the claim that Defoe is "father of the English novel." The chapter on *Robinson Crusoe*, while emphasizing Defoe's "supreme gift of assimilating everything for his creative purpose," and underplaying the element of realism in the novel, fails completely to establish the view that "in the end, it is the imagination that counts most in *Robinson Crusoe*." To insist that "Defoe knew human life through experience and observation, as well as through his wide reading" today seems unnecessary, even platitudinous, while to conclude that "in modern life and modern literature, the Crusoe situation creeps in wherever man conquers his environment or adapts himself to adverse circumstances" serves little purpose other than to stress the thesis that Defoe anticipated life in the modern world. Professor Moore's chapter "*Moll Flanders* and Others" is equally disappointing, since the critical attitude he adopts is almost exclusively associated with social history rather than with the form

the novels take. On Defoe as poet and wit, the author is more rewarding, and the section devoted to discussion of the *jure divino* especially illuminating. But in his comments on Defoe's literary achievements (excluding the journalistic) Professor Moore leaves unexamined the satiric wit and the situational comedy which provide the poetry and the novels with so much of their artistic value.

Since Hazlitt's remark about *Humphry Clinker* as "the most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written," most critics have dismissed Smollett as a mere imitator of the picaresque, as a humourist of small consequence, or as a writer of fiction whose work failed to explore "the subtle ironies and deeper ambiguities of life." Professor M. A. Goldberg attempts to illuminate the complexity of character structure and theme in Smollett's five novels by placing his author within the philosophic line of thought adopted by the Scottish Common-Sense School of Adam Smith, Lord Kames, Hugh Blair, Alexander Gerard, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Ferguson, among others. *Smollett and the Scottish School* is a series of studies in eighteenth-century thought which focus upon Smollett's fiction as a means of illustrating certain basic philosophic assumptions of the age. The result is a highly schematic analysis of the five novels which, while introducing many fresh insights, unfortunately gets mangled in the intricacies of its own machinery. Dr. Goldberg maintains that, most criticism to the contrary, "as revealed through his novels, Smollett is neither ambiguous nor contradictory"; rather, in "an age of irreconcilable faction and sharp dichotomy," Smollett "emerges as an understandable, integrated representative . . . capable of reconciling the standard contrarieties of the eighteenth century" through the influences of the Scottish Common-Sense School.

The basic premise of Dr. Goldberg's argument rests in his view of the eighteenth century as "an age of contention over a series of concepts seemingly antithetical": Toryism *versus* Whiggism; "neo-classic" *versus* "romantic"; rationalism *versus* empiricism and intuition; the rules *versus* spontaneity and sublimity. He maintains that "Smollett—like the forty-odd rhetoricians, estheticians, moral philosophers, social and cultural historians comprising the Scottish Common-Sense School—held to neither side of the controversy, but maintained a middle ground, experiential in method, ethical in end, insistent upon a 'common-sense' reconciliation of the standard contrarieties of the age." With this as his *modus operandi*, Dr. Goldberg proceeds to reduce each of the novels to an appropriate antithesis: in *Roderick Random*, reason and passion; in *Peregrine Pickle*, imagination and judgment; in *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, art and nature; in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, social- and self-love; and in *Humphry Clinker*, primitivism and progress. Such a method, though highly artificial and, one must admit, dispiriting, serves to place Smollett within the main stream of the Scottish philosophical and ethical tradition. But the merit of the book lies not in the definition of the novels' contexts, but rather in the analyses of their structural form. Too often, however, form is reduced to fit the Procrustean bed of the philosophical or moral argument, and Smollett's admittedly limited comic vision is lost in a welter of antitheses.

John Loftis's *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding* attempts to define the impact of the new bourgeois mercantile class upon comic drama, to examine the lively interaction between comedy and society, and to point up parallel and related changes between social values and the new comic forms. The book reviews on the one hand the influence of the "moralistic" criticism arising out of the Jeremy Collier controversy, which was sympathetic to the business community, and, on the other, the "aesthetic" criticism of Pope in *The Dunciad* and of his adherents, "who were largely hostile to the business community and what it represented." In addition, Professor Loftis discusses the shift in comic outlook occasioned by sentimentalism and benevolism and by such political and economic incidents as the South Sea Bubble, all of which issue ultimately in a more "democratic" form of comedy in which Restoration comic tradition is displaced by a dramatic form more sympathetic to the interests of the moneyed class. Whatever the validity of Professor Loftis's observations upon the interaction of comedy and society, his general conclusions with regard to comedy as a generic art form are, in many cases, much over-simplified. Any critical approach that treats comedy as a mere social phenomenon, as the reflection of social rivalries, leaves much to be desired. To summarize Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar as "critics of social behaviour rather than of the social structure," or to conclude that "for all its severe liabilities, sentimentalism brought freedom from the emotional inhibitions of the Restoration tradition," is surely to misconstrue, if not to misrepresent, the ethos of eighteenth-century comic practice. It may be amply evident from the plays after 1728 that "the dramatic treatment of the rich merchant is . . . nearly always sympathetic" (in the author's opinion a "*decisive* change") or that "the older aristocratic vein had become an anachronism," but the fact remains that such changes led inevitably to "the decline of drama," ironically enough the subject of Professor Loftis's final chapter.

Since its very beginnings Restoration comedy has been a critical *cause célèbre*. Jeremy Collier began the controversy with his censure of its "immorality and profaneness," while Dr. Johnson agreed with the "universal conviction" that the ultimate effect of Congreve's comedies was "to present pleasure in alliance with vice, and to relax those obligations by which life ought to be regulated." Among the distinguished Romantic critics Hazlitt perhaps best captured the essential comic sense of the Restoration, while his critical method succeeded in placing the plays of Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh in reasonable perspective. John Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners* (1913) marked the beginning of a flood of twentieth-century criticism which has included L. C. Knights' influential essay "Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth," a spate of controversial articles in *Essays in Criticism*, Professor Fujimura's *The Restoration Comedy of Wit* (1952), and, most recently, Dale Underwood's *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners* (1957). In *The First Modern Comedies*, Professor Norman Holland attempts to steer a middle course between the "manners" criticism of Palmer and the "wit and decorum" criticism of Fujimura by examining in detail the eleven comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve. He finds their common theme to be

"the discrepancy between appearance and nature," and their common subject, "the conflict between 'manners' (i.e. social conventions) and anti-social 'natural' desires. It is this dialectic between inner desires and outward appearances—not instincts alone or manners alone—that informs the comedies with masks, play-acting, disguise, intrigue, and perhaps most important, creates their language."

The flexibility and range of Professor Holland's critical method allow for evaluations which are remarkable for their perception and sensibility, and, in addition, take into account the structured language and verbal tone which distinguish such a play as *The Way of the World*. Of equal importance, however, is the author's skill in giving universal dimension to his dual theme, the separation of appearance from nature and of fact from value. He states with conclusive conviction that in an age of wrenched and shifting values Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve were "groping artistically for an ethic," which they found in "the harmonizing of appearances with nature through idealized personal emotion"; on the one hand are reason, society, and natural law, the realm of rational facts, and on the other, faith, and irrational value. In his individual analyses of the plays Professor Holland provides ample evidence for the validity of his central position, one that is neither too rigidly geared to the moral line of criticism nor too closely affined to the aesthetic. His discussion of dramatic structures, of the educative process associated with a leading comic character (whether a Dorimant, a Manly, or a Mirabell), and of the development and intensification of situation gives new insight into Restoration comedy, and firmly substantiates his argument that "comedy is basically a very serious business indeed." (GEORGE FALLE)

The following books are considered in this article:

New Letters to the Tatler and Spectator, edited by Richmond P. Bond. Austin: University of Texas Press [Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, Ltd.]. 1959. Pp. xiv, 233. $8.00.

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WHITMAN, HOWELLS, AND THE AMERICAN SCHOLARS

Criticism and scholarship in American literature has become in the last quarter-century a phenomenon that is surely without precedent in the history of literary studies. Prior to World War I the United States produced, at a generous estimate, less than a score of writers of commanding stature, and has produced an equal or somewhat larger number since. This body of writing, compared to the corpus of English or French literature, is slender indeed; yet it now dominates the undergraduate English programme in many American universities, and absorbs the major scholarly efforts of several thousand graduate students and instructors. The effect of this academic Niagara—swelling more rapidly than the literature it studies—is double: in uncontrolled falling, it produces enough froth to fill several scholarly journals ("A Lost Emerson Letter," "Hawthorne Digs Clams," "A Possible Source for 'So Long' " . . .), but when skilfully harnessed, the same stream generates enough power to produce scholarly editions, period studies, and critical biographies of the highest order.

There is cause for uneasiness even now, however, at this growing torrent of scholarship. The deafening imperative which commands American scholars to publish frequently drowns out the small, sane voice that raises questions of relevance and ripeness. In addition, the major American writers are being, or have been, so exhaustively "done" (the Melville bibliography now runs over a thousand items) that academics are tempted to place relatively inconsequential figures under the high-powered glass designed for the study of major artists. Thus the lady who produces a magnified portrait of Delia Bacin, *Prodigal Puritan*, merely succeeds in writing an over-long account of a New England curiosity; and the gentleman who writes of *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy* demonstrates unwittingly that Norton was nothing of the sort. Four recent contributions, two on Walt Whitman and two on William Dean Howells, suggest in small compass both the qualities and the defects of the American Scholar's approach to his own literature.

The methodical study of Walt Whitman has been under way for approximately three decades. In Mr. Gay Wilson Allen's biography, *The Solitary Singer* (New York: The Macmillan Company [Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada], 1955, pp. xviii, 616, $8.00) it reaches a major milestone. From his original study of Whitman's verse in *American Prosody* (1935), through his *Whitman Handbook* (1946), to the present biography, Mr. Allen has moved closer and closer to the creation of a complete and balanced picture of America's most controversial classic. The resources available for this new biography (published on the hundreth anniversary of *Leaves of Grass*) are staggering: in the twelve years following the appearance of Henry Seidel Canby's *Walt Whitman: An American* (1943) a dozen book-length contributions, scores of articles, and an uncounted number of dissertations appeared. At the same time, indefatigable collectors (the biography acknowledges eight private and nine public

collections) amassed hundreds of new documents ranging from books annotated by Whitman to dated swimming pool receipts. To all this Mr. Allen adds his own gifts—a fine critical sense, complete knowledge of Whitman's writing, a sensitive ability to judge the weight and relevance of facts, and a clear, unpedantic tone.

The result is a chronological story which, though painstaking in detail, permits us to see the poet and his work with great clarity. As we watch the *Leaves* springing from the living context of Whitman's career, we are constantly led to reassess our understanding of their meaning and shape. For example, the "Calamus" motif which so offended Whitman's own generation can now be seen as an attempt to deal with ambivalent sexual feelings (which in his private life troubled Whitman deeply) by establishing their relation to his poetic vision of a universe actuated by Love. This is not to suggest that poetry was merely an instrument of autotherapy for Whitman: he longs to "tell the secret of my nights and days"—a secret whose deepest heart is not a sordid confession but an approach to the inexplicable mystery of the creative act. Thus these poems—"the frailest leaves of me, and yet my strongest lasting"—use images of nature's fecundity and human love in all its manifestations as symbols of a cosmic creative process. The poet tries to "shade down and hide" his thoughts, but "they expose me more than all my other poems."

In the same way, the paradox of Whitman's simultaneous intellectualism and anti-intellectualism is illuminated when we see, through his many friendships and literary acquaintances, that he loved both people and ideas, but deeply distrusted bloodless logicians and rule-followers, whatever their cleverness or force. We learn, too, that Whitman's alleged vanity and self-advertising were less the product of a "barbaric yawp" (Mr. Allen enters copious evidence on this point) than of a prophet's incredulity at the materialism of his age. Mr. Allen does not force any of these issues, nor does he, in discrediting a number of persistent Whitman myths, plunge at the lure of sensationalism. His account of the "Good Grey Poet," though certainly not the whole "song of myself," gives us more than any other. And that is a lot.

The second Whitman book, *A Critical Guide to "Leaves of Grass"* by James E. Miller, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Toronto: University of Toronto Press], 1957, pp. xiv, 268, $6.00), illustrates somewhat less impressively than *The Solitary Singer* another arm of the giant of American studies. Taking the now-familiar stand that the *text* is the prime document in literary studies, Mr. Miller sets out vigorously "to examine *Leaves of Grass* as what it purports to be and is—poetry." A great deal of the critical froth mentioned above results from a narrow interpretation of this method as an esoteric exercise in word association (we recall, for example, a recent reading of James' *The American* based on the assumption that Mrs. Bread's name is a pun on "bred"). Mr. Miller's analysis does not irresponsibly sever Whitman's *Leaves* from their biographical and social roots, but in pressing his search for a coherent and unifying poetic structure in the volume he goes farther than historically oriented scholars would be likely to follow. In justification of this search he reminds us

of Whitman's statement, "I delight to make a poem where I feel clear that not a word but is indispensable part thereof and of my meaning"; and of his deathbed injunction that the 1891 edition of *Leaves of Grass* be preserved "complete as I left it." What emerges is an analysis of particular poems ("Song of Myself," "Brooklyn Ferry," "Passage to India," and a number of the "smaller leaves") that expands and often improves upon Mr. Allen's commentary. But though Mr. Miller reveals the shape of poem after poem, he falls short of his major objective: we are not convinced that *Leaves of Grass* is an epic form, however tentative or "organic"; or that Whitman designed its structure as a carefully-articulated portrait of "*en masse*" Man, the archetypal American. The individual "leaves"—those numberless voices, tongues, blades, and clusters—bear out almost everything that Mr. Miller hears in them, and we are grateful for his sensitive explications; but his analysis of their larger structure and grouping, though the most satisfactory offered to date, cannot be accepted as definitive. If the biographical mapping of Whitman's career is now far advanced, the critical mapping of *Leaves of Grass* is only well begun.

These two books suggest forcefully the vast resources and the imaginative power of scholarship in American literature. Clearly, before the tide of Whitman studies ebbs, we shall have a *Variorum Whitman*, a definitive edition of the *Works* and *Letters*, and perhaps a "log" or composite biography of the kind pioneered by Mr. Jay Leyda in *The Melville Log*, and more recently improved upon in Edward Nehls' three-volume work, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*. In addition, we shall have critical studies less reverent of the "inviolable form" of the *Leaves* than Mr. Miller is, but inescapably much in his debt. Already, through the energy and benevolence of a leading collector, Mr. Charles E. Feinberg, and the sponsorship of Wayne State University, Whitman studies have achieved a focus in the *Walt Whitman Review*, a journal which (like the bulletins of the Melville Society) keeps scholars informed of projects and achievements. The "passage to Whitman" is well under way.

But if the phenomenon of the American scholars' massive studies in Whitman, Melville, Emerson, Hawthorne, James, Faulkner, and others is a Niagara of power, the same power, turned on lesser figures, produces results which are disturbing and even embarrassing. With investigations of America's major writers in full career, or nearing completion, the hungry academy has turned to less fashionable or less significant figures, and to periods and regions less inviting than the twenties or mid-nineteenth century New England. Two new books on William Dean Howells suggest the dangers of this situation.

Unquestionably Howells was a most influential figure in the development of American writing, and the Gilded Age through which he lived is the least understood period of American history. There is therefore a genuine need for such studies of the age and its best minds as we find in the published volumes of Mr. Ernest Samuels' three-part biography of Henry Adams, and in pioneering works like Everett Carter's *Howells and the Age of Realism* (1954). But Howells himself—whatever his socio-literary importance—was not a great writer. As Henry James wrote in confidence to Charles Eliot Norton: "The face of nature and civilization in this our country is to a certain point a very sufficient

literary field. But it will yield its secrets only to a really *grasping* imagination. . . . This I think Howells lacks. . . . To write well and worthily of American things one needs even more than elsewhere to be a *master*." Since this view of Howells has not been successfully challenged by students of late nineteenth-century fiction, it is somewhat disturbing to learn that thirty-three doctoral dissertations preceded Professor Edwin H. Cady's two-volume biography of Howells (1955, 1958). And it is nothing less than appalling to discover that Howells' mind and art are now being studied with the same intensity that has been lavished on Melville and James.

The anomalies of this academic "Project W.D.H." are strongly present for both author and reader in Mr. George N. Bennett's study, *William Dean Howells: The Development of a Novelist* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press [Toronto: Burns & MacEachern], 1959, pp. xviii, 220, $5.00); in *The Quiet Rebel: William Dean Howells as Social Commentator*, by Robert L. Hough (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959, pp. viii, 137, $4.00) the radical imbalance between weight of method and weight of subject becomes a judgment on the academy. Mr. Bennett's thesis is well argued, well written, and thoroughly documented. The hypercritical picture of Howells as a genteel *arriviste*, an intellectual pussy-footer, and "a willing sacrifice on the altar of Boston Brahminism," Mr. Bennett contends, wilfully overlooks his slow but coherent progress from the observation of manners to deep social and moral questioning. By rereading the novels with great care, and placing them against the background of Howells' career, Mr. Bennett reveals the myopia of popular and expert opinion alike: Howells was more than an adroit oarsman who avoided equally the roughest snags of left and right; he was a moralist whose conscience drove him mercilessly to see the reality of his age and to document that reality in a form that his audience would accept. The question which Mr. Bennett hesitates to answer, however, is whether Howells' regard for his audience did not, finally, emasculate his art. Tolstoi, Turgenev, and Zola are frequently mentioned in this study, but Mr. Bennett does not risk a comparison of Howells' work with theirs and Eliot, Hardy, and Moore—more relevant comparisons—are ignored. Mr. Bennett does convince us that Howells was a serious and occasionally worthy novelist, but he does not persuade us that his devotion to the democratic average (the up-from-the-root middle class) ever achieved the intensity of high art. Yet despite his reluctance to distinguish clearly between "high purpose" and "high achievement" in Howells' fiction, Mr. Bennett has written a useful book. His judicious discussion of Howells' editorship of the *Atlantic* is so good that we wish he had felt less defensive about the larger issues of his subject.

If Mr. Bennett occasionally brings us apprehensively to the edge of our chairs, fearing that he will finally identify Howells with Tolstoi, rather than comparing their master-acolyte relation, Mr. Robert Hough's picture of *The Quiet Rebel: William Dean Howells as Social Commentator* brings us to our feet in weary protest. That Howells, despite his public defence of the victims of the Haymarket Riot trial, was ever genuinely rebellious is extremely dubious. Mr. Hough's contentions that his writing could not "show real

social concern" while he was editor of the *Atlantic*, and that the columns he wrote in comfortable old age from "The Editor's Easy Chair" of *Harper's Monthly* are important social criticism—these claims are the stuff of academic dreams. Howells, as Mr. Hough makes all too clear, had a great deal to say about American society from his "Easy Chair" between 1900 and 1920. He was neither *Quiet*, nor by any latitude of definition a *Rebel*; instead, in the tradition of *Atlantic* and *Harper's* editors, he was a superior editorial moralist, and a polite stylist who popularized the ideas of others—a voice, in short, of sane, solid, but seldom fervent criticism. That Mr. Hough is content to document Howells' role as social commentator without serious mention of Edward Bellamy, Henry George, and E. L. Godkin, and that he feels it safe to ignore G. B. Shaw, Samuel Butler, and Henry Adams is perhaps a sufficient comment on the range of his study.

I return very briefly to the question of the American Scholar's record in the study of his literature to face a final problem: in literary study, ignorance of the general context which produces an artist is surely not an admissible excuse for the scholar's failure to distinguish between "mighty little men" (as Hawthorne called the Pygmies) and authentic giants. The American scholar is without rival in his ability to unearth and organize information, but he is often reluctant, or perhaps simply ill-equipped, to *place* his subject in the larger context of Western literature. For example, a discussion of Hawthorne or Howells which neither studies their reactions to Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, or Arnold, Carlyle, and Ruskin, nor attempts to measure them against their international contemporaries, is something less than complete. These men did not live in splendid American isolation. A century ago, Emerson's warning that Americans had "waited too long on the courtly muses of Europe" was fully justified: American writers had to declare their imaginative independence. In 1960, however, the American scholar who ignores the European muse altogether is in danger of succumbing to a new provincialism. This, in view of America's current responsibilities in international culture, is a mistaken direction. For the moment, the task of "Shooting Niagara" may be an all-absorbing challenge, but scholars and curriculum-makers should already be considering the second part of Carlyle's slogan: ". . . And After?" (HUGO MCPHERSON)

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